



# The Human Services Workforce Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## *Understanding the Afterschool Workforce: Opportunities and Challenges for an Emerging Profession*



Prepared by the  
National Afterschool Association for Cornerstones for Kids

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# **Understanding the Afterschool Workforce: Opportunities and Challenges for an Emerging Profession**

**A report of the National AfterSchool Association**

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**Prepared by the National AfterSchool Association for Cornerstones for Kids**

## Cornerstones for Kids Introduction

The Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI) is focused on the frontline workers serving vulnerable children and families. HSWI's premise is that human services matter. Delivered well, they can, and do, positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, often at critical points in their lives.

We believe that the quality of the frontline worker influences the effectiveness of services they deliver to children and families. If workers are well-trained and supported, have access to the resources that they need, possess a reasonable workload, and are valued by their employers, it follows that they will be able to effectively perform their jobs. If, however, they are as vulnerable as the children and families that they serve, they will be ineffective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Unfortunately, all indications today are that our frontline human services workforce is struggling. In some instances poor compensation contributes to excessive turnover; in others an unreasonable workload and endless paperwork render otherwise capable staff ineffective; and keeping morale up is difficult in the human services fields. It is remarkable that so many human services professionals stick to it, year after year.

HSWI's mission is to work with others to raise the visibility of, and sense of urgency about, workforce issues. Through a series of publications and other communications efforts we hope to

- Call greater attention to workforce issues
- Help to describe and define the status of the human services workforce
- Disseminate data on current conditions
- Highlight best and promising practices
- Suggest systemic and policy actions that can make a deep, long-term difference

In this paper, the National AfterSchool Association reports on the results of its survey of afterschool workers, providing a detailed description of the workforce. While generalizations about the overall national workforce must be made with caution, the sample is large and diverse, and these data, along with the information from the Next Gen survey of youth workers, provide the most complete description available of this workforce. Based on the results of these information-gathering efforts NAA suggests policy and practice strategies that will strengthen the afterschool field.

Additional information on the human services workforce, and on HSWI, is available at [www.cornerstones4kids.org](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org).

Cornerstones For Kids  
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# **Understanding the Afterschool Workforce: Opportunities and Challenges for an Emerging Profession**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The results of the National AfterSchool Association's (NAA) survey of the afterschool workforce provide insights into short-term needs for ensuring staff are prepared to understand and meet the needs of children in their programs and to longer-term strategies for building afterschool work as a profession. The profile of the survey's respondents shows a workforce with many workers with little experience or education directly relevant to afterschool as well as frequent turnover and many part-time workers, suggesting the need for training approaches to ensure basic knowledge of afterschool work.

At the same time, findings of a large number of well-educated staff and a core of experienced workers committed to the profession underscore the need to create a structure for establishing qualifications and a path for advancement. Doing so would enable staff to view work in afterschool programs as a career and receive the training and support they need to flourish. We also have to develop strategies for increasing compensation to attract and retain qualified staff. Only then can we be confident about producing the positive outcomes for children and youth which we know can result from a quality afterschool program.

Accomplishing these goals will not be the work of one or two organizations or a handful of people. The afterschool field is still emerging and encompasses a variety of approaches and purposes in programming for children and youth during out-of-school time. The field needs to come together around the commonalities of our work, agree on what is needed to move the afterschool field forward, and work to increase the resources to build the field as a whole.

As a field, we need to look at the potential roles of various people and institutions that have an interest in and effect upon the nature of afterschool work: the national leaders and organizations of the afterschool field itself (including NAA and others such as the National Institute on Out-of-School-Time, the Forum for Youth Investment, the Afterschool Alliance); policymakers at federal, state, and local levels; agencies that administer publicly-funded afterschool programs or otherwise regulate such programs; and workers in afterschool programs themselves. In achieving our long-term goals for the profession, it is often helpful to think of the work of afterschool workers in the broader context of youth work, for the ability to positively affect children and youth is a goal that extends beyond afterschool programming.

Unquestionably, a well-trained staff is an important component in a quality afterschool program. Studies such as the Massachusetts After-School Research Study (MARS) have found that "programs with more highly-educated and better-paid staff had significantly better quality." The study of high-performing afterschool programs operated by The After-School Corporation found that a key shared characteristic was "a strong, experienced leader/manager supported by a trained and supervised staff." As policymakers increase expectations on afterschool programs to improve academic performance and address other issues the existence of a well-trained afterschool workforce becomes imperative—although these same policymakers do not always make the connection.

As part of a comprehensive effort to describe the youth work and afterschool workforces, Cornerstones for Kids supported NAA and other organizations to explore specific sectors of the youth work field. With a survey developed to allow comparison with previous studies and to fill gaps in existing information, NAA surveyed the afterschool workforce. This nationwide survey was distributed through existing NAA affiliates, allied organizations, and other youth-serving organizations. It was widely publicized on Web sites, in professional publications, and in newsletters. It was made available in electronic and paper formats in three languages. A total of 4,346 afterschool workers completed the survey. In addition NAA conducted eight focus groups of over 100 afterschool workers across the U.S. to explore further findings of the survey.

In examining the survey results, it is important to remember that we cannot determine how representative the sample is, because we do not know the universe of afterschool programs and workers. Given the widespread marketing of the survey through various afterschool venues, however, we believe the insights revealed are valid in developing future policy directions. The major areas in which the survey helps us understand the dynamics of the afterschool workforce are workforce preparation, worker status in terms of full-time and part-time work, compensation, and workforce stability.

## **Who are the Afterschool Workers?**

The survey respondents showed balanced representation in various age groups. Many are mature workers—42 percent are over the age of 40. Younger workers under the age of 30 account for about a third of the respondents. The workers are overwhelmingly female, and 73 percent are white and 26 percent are minorities

***Why do they come into the afterschool field?*** When asked why they came into the afterschool field, full-time workers most frequently said because they enjoy working with children and youth. For both full-time and part-time employees, the hours and the flexibility of the work are attractive. Focus group participants commented that the hours fit their life and family obligations, allowing them to work and still be with their children.

## **How Prepared is the Workforce for Afterschool Work? Education, Work Experience, and Professional Development**

The education and experience profile of our survey respondents suggests that, while as a whole they were more highly educated than anticipated, there is a gap between the subject areas in which degrees were attained or the nature of previous work experience and the appropriate preparation needed for working with children and youth in afterschool settings. Moreover, many workers seem to lack training opportunities once employed in afterschool, and this problem contributes to staff turnover.

A substantial percentage of survey respondents had completed higher education degree programs, an encouraging finding. About two-thirds (67 percent) have a two-year degree or higher, and over half (55.2 percent) have a bachelor's degree or higher. These proportions held for all age groups above the age of 22, although the proportion of BA's versus master's degrees shifted somewhat in the older age categories. Another eight percent of respondents have a School

Age Certificate or a Child Development Associate credential, leaving just one-fourth with only a high-school diploma.

It is not clear how prepared workers were for afterschool work. Many holders of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees studied in disciplines related to working with children and youth, such as early childhood education, education, recreation, and counseling. Others had degrees in more general disciplines, such as business administration, liberal arts, and sociology. Yet, even fields not directly related to youth work can be useful in enriching afterschool programs, if the staff holding these degrees master the competencies that enable them to apply their knowledge to working with children and youth. Thus, our survey results suggest a need to prepare even degreed workers for the specific job of working with children and youth in an afterschool setting. It should be noted that there are few degree programs with content specific to the afterschool field.

***What experience do workers bring?*** Data from the survey suggest that respondents were mixed in terms of whether their prior work experience was related to their new jobs in youth work. A little less than a fourth of respondents had been teachers or child care workers, and another six percent had been teachers aides or had worked in other afterschool programs. About one in seven respondents had been students prior to joining the afterschool field, and others had been employed in a wide variety of occupations. Thus, while a core of new workers had some related experience, clearly there is a need for at least some training for many new employees in afterschool work.

***How available is training and professional development?*** Workers see training and educational qualifications as important, but may not have an easy time accessing professional development opportunities. Forty percent of respondents in urban settings and 38 percent in suburban settings had access to paid time for training, while only 23 percent of their rural colleagues reported similar access. The survey did not obtain comprehensive information on the availability and type of training for workers. However, we know from responses to our question about what would make workers stay in the afterschool field that professional development opportunities might persuade them to stay. About a fourth said more training opportunities and tuition reimbursement were important, while about a fifth cited paid time for training.

***On-the-Job Training or Formal Education?*** Our focus group participants discussed whether experience was an appropriate substitute for education. Many felt that while skills can be taught, experience on the job is also important. However, the participants also felt that formal education should be required to advance in the field and take on certain responsibilities.

## **The Nature of Their Work: Organizational Characteristics and Settings**

The survey results illustrated the diversity of settings and activities that characterize afterschool work. The respondents to our survey work in settings ranging from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers to YMCA's and Boys and Girls Clubs; from school-owned and operated to community- and faith-based programs. Three in five work in a licensed program, while the remainder work in programs exempt from licensing. One in eight works in an accredited program. They typically work with children ages 12 and under and are relatively balanced among urban, suburban, and rural. The activities most frequently offered in the programs in



which respondents work include academic enrichment (41 percent), recreation/sports (35.6 percent), tutorial assistance (26 percent), and life-skills/leadership (22.3 percent).

## **Organizational Practices and Policies: Job Types and Compensation**

Two of the most widely perceived issues for afterschool are the large number of part-time workers and the low levels of compensation that are prevalent in the field. We found fewer part-time workers than we expected, but cannot determine if the survey under-represented this category. Compensation levels, unfortunately, were low overall and in line with what we expected to find.

***Full-time vs. Part-time*** About 60 percent of respondents described themselves as full time, although we cannot tell how people classified themselves if they only worked during the school year. This proportion is encouraging in programs that by their nature do not serve children and youth for more than a few hours a day, suggesting that organizations providing afterschool programs are able to offer substantial positions to their staff. By the same token, however, almost two in five workers are part-time, which is a sizeable portion of the survey pool. As the analysis of various characteristics will show, part-time workers create particular concerns about their qualifications and compensation.

***How Well Are They Compensated?*** The wages, salaries, and benefits reported by our survey respondents underscore the stark reality that workers in child-serving occupations such as afterschool are not well compensated. Well-educated and full-time workers are at the higher end of the salary and benefit scale, while less educated and part-time workers are at the low end of the wage scale, and part-time workers have few benefits.

Respondents are compensated either through hourly wages or an annual salary. The average hourly wage reported is \$10.75. The average salary is \$25,000. These wages are in line with related fields. As would be expected, mature workers (45 and older) are better compensated than younger workers under age 25—\$12.00 an hour for the older group compared with \$9.25 an hour, and \$37,500 per year for the older group compared with \$12,000 per year for the younger. The older group is more likely to be salaried.

Many workers lack access to benefits: 21.8 percent of respondents do not receive any benefits. A little more than half have access to medical insurance; slightly more receive sick days. A little more than 40 percent have retirement benefits. As with most occupations, being a full-time worker makes a huge difference in terms of benefits: 85 percent of these workers have medical insurance compared with only 11.2 percent of part-time workers.

***What makes a difference in compensation?*** Not surprisingly, educational level makes a big difference in compensation. The average salary for a person with a two-year or higher degree is \$37,000. Workers with less than a two-year degree tend to be hourly employees (77.7 percent of this category) and have an average hourly wage of \$9.75.

Part-time workers, who are more likely to be paid hourly and have only a high school diploma, have the lowest average wage, \$9.00 an hour.

Workers in accredited programs have higher salaries: a dollar more per hour for hourly-wage workers and \$4,000 a year more for salaried workers over non-accredited programs. Because the process of accreditation brings with it an understanding that a well-trained staff is a key ingredient of quality programming and because accreditation may also bring in more funding from subsidies and other sources, these programs may be more willing and able to compensate their staff at a higher level. Further study is needed to determine whether this is the case or whether programs that go through the accreditation process are better funded to begin with.

## **Workforce Status and Stability**

While there is a core of stable and experienced workers in the survey sample, a large portion of the workforce has relatively few years in the afterschool field. When we look at the length of time respondents have been in their current jobs, the data suggest significant movement within the field and even within organizations, with a large proportion of workers having held their current positions for a short time. This indication of significant turnover suggests the constant need for programs to recruit, orient, and train staff.

A lack of attachment to the afterschool field is found particularly among part-time workers and younger respondents. Sixty percent of part-time workers reported that they are likely to leave the field in under three years. Three-fourths of workers 25 or younger plan to stay in the field for under three years.

There is also evidence of a “brain drain.” Thirty-seven percent of the well-educated workforce leaves between year three and year ten. This pattern suggests that afterschool work is a good way for degreed workers to obtain work experience, but for many the field does not satisfy the need for a career path because of the lack of opportunities for advancement or adequate compensation.

There is, however, a sizeable core of workers with greater longevity. A little more than one in three respondents has been in the field for more than seven years. One in five have been in the field for more than 10 years. Not surprisingly, older workers give the workforce a measure of stability: about 46 percent plan to stay seven years or more. Many workers displayed an attachment to the afterschool field, if not to their current jobs. A little more than half of workers who planned to stay in their jobs for longer than a year still planned to seek professional advancement in the afterschool field, while more than a third felt they would remain in their current positions until they retired.

***Why do they leave?*** Of those who said they will leave the afterschool field, personal life changes such as marriage, children, or relocation are the top reason (23.1 percent). Another issue following close behind is compensation: 22.9 percent cited seeking better wages at a job outside the afterschool workforce as their reason for leaving.

***What would make them stay?*** Afterschool workers clearly feel they are performing important work for children and youth in their jobs. When asked what would make them stay in the field, 71 percent indicated, “An opportunity to make a difference.” Other frequently cited reasons were advancement, medical insurance, and decision-making power, as well as opportunities for training mentioned previously.

## A Tale of Two Workforces

An examination of the data from NAA's survey suggests that the story of the afterschool workforce is actually that of two workforces—although, again, we cannot tell how representative our respondents are and the groups we see are certainly not monolithic. In general, however, we have one set of workers who are mostly full-time, better educated, better compensated, less prone to turnover (although many do leave for other fields after several years), and who see afterschool work as a profession. The other is a group of workers who are part-time, likely to be less educated, usually paid hourly wages, and, like part-time workers in general, lacking benefits. These workers are most likely to have frequent turnover, and while they enjoy working with children and youth, they think of afterschool as a great job, not a profession.

What do these two workforces mean for planning and providing the type of training and career paths needed to ensure a well-qualified, stable workforce that can provide high-quality afterschool services to our children and youth? Clearly, we have to address the “here and now” of our workforce as well as to consider how likely it is that some of the less stable features identified in our survey will always be with us. After all, afterschool programs by their nature do not last all day, so some part-time positions are most likely unavoidable and may not even be undesirable.

The focus groups noted that the flexibility of part-time work was attractive to many workers trying to balance work and family obligations. Yet, the analysis of part-timers suggests that this group is not made up predominantly of well-educated people looking for a job for a few hours so they can still spend time with their own children, although such workers are doubtless represented in the group. Rather, the data suggest that many of these workers are relatively unskilled and are not looking for a long-term career in these jobs—nor would one expect them to, given their low level of pay.

A closely related issue is that of another group expecting to stay in the field only a few years, younger workers age 25 or less. Three-quarters of them expected to leave within three years. One of our challenges is to provide adequate training and other opportunities that would make the field more attractive over the long term for these young workers, especially those with degrees. But we also need to examine the roles and responsibilities necessary in entry-level jobs to determine the type of workers programs need to recruit in terms of qualifications and help them attract these workers.

The implication of the second of the workforces is that the afterschool field is attracting many well-educated workers. Some of them may need some training in how to work with young people; they definitely need a career path to keep them in the field. While better-educated, salaried workers are more attached to the field, they are not immune to turnover problems. The survey data suggest that a number of educated workers come into the field, stay for a few years, and leave, possibly for fields where they will find better pay and more opportunities for advancement.

A final issue, but one that looms large for the afterschool field, is that of compensation. Attracting and retaining qualified staff is inextricably linked to the levels of pay and benefits programs can offer. We cannot build a profession without being able to link increased

qualifications to increased pay and attractive benefits. Moreover, we cannot stabilize a part-time workforce without providing more benefits.

We in the afterschool field need to look at our long-term vision for professionalizing our workforce and take steps to ensure that afterschool work becomes a “destination” occupation, not a transitory stop along the way to another career. We must create a framework that establishes the qualifications and requirements of the profession, a framework in which afterschool workers can train and find a career path through which they can advance. We need to make afterschool a field for which people purposefully train, perhaps in the context of training for more general youth work.

We must address the low compensation that is a major barrier to building and retaining the professional workforce necessary to fulfill the promise of afterschool for children and youth. But we also need to be careful not to leave our less skilled, more transitory workers behind. Realistically, the ability of afterschool programs to provide more generous compensation to their workers is not going to change overnight. Nor are programs going to be able to create many more full-time positions in the near term. So any training structure must take into account the needs of all afterschool workers, not just the most skilled and well educated.

## **Building a More Professional Afterschool Workforce**

NAA believes the afterschool field must come together to create this framework for the afterschool workforce and is eager to play a leadership role. The organization is certainly not the first to recognize this need, which has been expressed by many within the field. But the profile of the workers in our survey gives us a new foundation of knowledge as well as a revealing picture of what we need to accomplish. Accordingly, we recommend that the field take the following steps.

### **Competencies and Qualifications**

- ***Establish core competencies:*** The field needs to establish the knowledge and skills needed, or core competencies, for all afterschool workers. Broad agreement within the field would provide guidelines for and help ensure the comparability of credentials or certificates being awarded by different states and institutions.
- ***Establish an afterschool credentialing system:*** The competencies should be linked to a credentialing system for afterschool workers. The field should consider a tiered credential system with an entry-level credential that younger workers with less training might be encouraged to pursue as well as one for workers at a more advanced stage of their professional development.
- ***Establish a framework that includes a career lattice and pathways to advancement:*** Professional qualifications and performance objectives tied to job responsibilities are the basis of workforce development. Measuring a worker’s performance against clearly defined professional and program objectives helps to maintain program quality, job satisfaction, and professional development. This performance measurement, linked with career lattices, will help connect qualifications with job responsibilities and compensation levels. Such a structure also illustrates the degree of seriousness with which afterschool programs view their mission and the value of qualified staff.

## Training Systems and Opportunities

- ***Provide training on core competencies:*** We need to devise training to address the needs of different levels of workers, including training directed at entry-level and less skilled staff, workers with degrees not directly relevant to afterschool, and workers pursuing credentials. We cannot afford to ignore the workers who stay only a short time or work part-time, because they make up too large a portion of our workforce. They need some minimum level of knowledge in the core competencies required to work in afterschool programs. Moreover, providing training and supporting pursuit of a credential is an excellent way to foster an attachment to the field.
- ***Expand Quality training and professional development opportunities:*** We need to expand quality training and professional development opportunities for all workers, including encouraging programs to give workers paid time off to attend training. Another need is for approaches such as distance learning to increase access to training in rural areas. We also should establish a core group of high quality, recognized, and approved trainers and promote ways to share the knowledge of experienced afterschool staff, for example, through mentoring younger staff.
- ***Provide afterschool/youth work content in higher education curricula:*** We need to work with institutions of higher education to provide more course work relevant to youth work and afterschool that could be accessed by workers and students pursuing credentials or a degree. We also need to work with these institutions to address the needs of the adult learners in our workforce who would be candidates for these courses.
- ***Advocate for funding for training and professional development:*** Policymakers at all levels need to provide more funding specifically for training and professional development for afterschool staff through supports such as scholarships and loan forgiveness. In advocating for such funding, the afterschool field needs to highlight the connection between positive outcomes for children and youth in afterschool—a goal endorsed by policymakers—and the qualifications of the staff that provide afterschool services.
- ***Create mechanisms to pay for higher education:*** The field needs to explore and advocate for more avenues to help afterschool workers pay for education that will increase their qualifications to work with young people, for example, through loan forgiveness, Americorps, and scholarship funds. Policymakers should include afterschool workers in loan forgiveness provisions for early childhood workers in bills to reauthorize the federal Higher Education Act and in state legislation as well.
- ***Provide human resources staff with the training and resources they need to recruit and hire:*** Although the focus of this project and resulting report is on the current afterschool workforce, it's difficult not to consider the need for effective recruiting and hiring techniques in afterschool programs. A program's workforce begins with, and its success reflects, the recruiting and hiring of employees who are adequately matched to a program's core competencies and needs.

## Compensation and Recognition of Quality in Policy

- ***Increase reimbursement rates and funding for afterschool programs:*** The field needs to work at the state and local levels to increase overall reimbursement rates and per student funding levels for afterschool programs, which could help raise worker compensation levels.
- ***Promote inclusion of staff qualifications and credentials in state and local policies regarding licensing and quality improvement for afterschool:*** Several states have recognized credentials and the need for a qualification and training system in their regulatory policies for afterschool. The field needs to advocate for more recognition of this type, tied to better funding.
- ***Advocate for tiered reimbursement rates based on program quality:*** The field needs to advocate for more states to provide higher reimbursement rates for accredited programs and to provide incentives to support staff in pursuing qualifications such as credentials.
- ***Encourage private sector support of afterschool as a benefit to increase productivity and retain workers:*** Private businesses have a stake in afterschool programming, which enables parents to work when their children are out of school. Afterschool programming is also important to producing future workers. Not only have afterschool programs been shown to support success in school, they also help children develop good social and other life skills, so important to succeeding later on in the workplace.

## Research and Advocacy on the Critical Importance of Afterschool Staff

- ***Ensure that the link between trained and stable staff and quality programs is understood:*** Members of the afterschool field need to ensure that adequate research is completed and publicized widely to educate parents, policymakers, and funders on the critical role qualified professionals play in ensuring that afterschool programming provides quality services for children and youth.

# I. Introduction

Most of those involved in the afterschool field have impressions of the composition of the workforce and the barriers the field faces in attracting and retaining well-qualified workers. These perceptions are based on knowledge of specific programs and small studies. No national data have been gathered on the characteristics of afterschool workers, their plans for the future, and their view of the field in which they work. With support from Cornerstones for Kids, the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) undertook a survey to create a portrait of the afterschool workforce and gain insights into how it might be developed—from an emerging profession to one that is fully recognized.

Defining the afterschool workforce and the depth and scope of the programming it provides has been a challenge for the field. In addition, the lack of consistent methods to track the existence of afterschool programs and workers at the local and state levels, as well as nationally, makes it difficult to determine the number of individuals in the afterschool workforce. There have been several state-wide or community-based efforts to define the features of the workforce known as “afterschool.” In most cases, the samples were small and geographically specific. In other cases, the afterschool workforce was lumped into childcare or other social service fields.

For the purpose of this survey, the afterschool workforce is considered a specialized sub-set of youth work. While all afterschool programming can be considered youth work, not all youth work is afterschool programming. We defined an afterschool professional as an individual who works with school-age children and youth in an organized setting when they are not in school.

Although the sample surveyed for this project is statistically significant (n = 4,346), it is important to note that we do not have an understanding of what percentage of the entire workforce the sample represents. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised

## The Afterschool Professional

An afterschool professional is an individual who works with school-age children and youth in an organized setting when they are not in school.

Afterschool programming and the afterschool workforce are very diverse. NAA uses the following guiding tenets to better inform the overall understanding of the complexity of the field:

- Afterschool professionals work with children and youth in a variety of settings and provide programming that meets the needs of the children, families, and the community at large.
- Afterschool professionals work with young people who are primarily between the ages of 5 and 14.
- Afterschool professionals are employed in settings that provide a conduit between the school and families to better identify and provide programming that helps children become successful members of the community.
- The programming that afterschool professionals provide strives to develop, strengthen, and maintain the social/emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities of the children served.
- Afterschool professionals come from a variety of educational and social backgrounds, bringing a diversity of cultural and life experiences to the field.

when using the data collected to represent the entire afterschool workforce.

NAA's survey of the afterschool workforce is part of a larger study of the broader field of youth workers, who were surveyed concurrently by the Forum for Youth Investment for the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition. NAA and the Forum for Youth Investment shared information about survey design and questions so that the information from the two surveys could be used together to identify trends, commonalities, and differences.<sup>1</sup>

## **The National AfterSchool Association**

The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) is the leading voice of the afterschool profession, which is dedicated to the development, education, and care of children and youth during their out-of-school time hours. NAA is the only professional association in the field; as such, the organization represents the broad and diverse array of afterschool staff currently serving children and youth during the non-school hours.

NAA's membership consists of more than 9,000 afterschool practitioners organized through 36 state affiliate organizations and a national office. In addition to providing member services, NAA administers the national accreditation system for afterschool programs based on national program standards; hosts the largest national conference in the field; publishes *The Afterschool Review* journal; and provides public policy support in Washington, DC, working closely with the Afterschool Alliance.

NAA accomplishes its mission by focusing on four primary areas:

- Membership
- Professional Development
- Program Improvement and Quality
- Public Policy and Advocacy

NAA's partners include the Department of Defense (four branches of the United States Military, Community and Family Policy) 4-H, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girl Scouts, the Afterschool Alliance, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, the Forum for Youth Investment, the Academy for Educational Development Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, and the Finance Project.

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<sup>1</sup>A report of the Next Gen survey findings can be found on the Cornerstones for Kids Web site.



## Importance of the Afterschool Workforce

Unquestionably, a well-trained staff is an important component in a quality afterschool program. According to the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS), “education, compensation (including salary and benefits), and retention of staff are key to after-school program quality. Programs with more highly-educated and better-paid staff had significantly better quality.” Yet the average pay for an afterschool professional in the study was between \$10.55 and \$11.50 per hour.<sup>i</sup> The study of high-performing afterschool programs operated by the After-School Corporation found that a key shared characteristic was “a strong, experienced leader/manager supported by a trained and supervised staff.”<sup>ii</sup> A study of credentialing for the youth workforce cites a body of research that has found similar connections.<sup>iii</sup>

As policymakers place increasing expectations on afterschool programs to improve academic performance and address other issues the existence of a well-trained afterschool workforce becomes imperative—although these same policymakers do not always make the connection.

## Project Design and Methods

Cornerstones for Kids supported a comprehensive approach to studying the current youth work workforce by encouraging collaboration and communication among several national organizations. This collaborative approach allowed for exploration into several aspects of the afterschool and youth work workforce. While each organization looked at specific sectors and aspects of the youth work field, several overlapping areas created an opportunity to merge information and data, thereby creating a more comprehensive look at the field of youth work.

In this effort, the National AfterSchool Association surveyed the afterschool workforce, and the Forum for Youth Investment, for the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition studied issues related to the youth work field. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time conducted a scan of youth and afterschool worker credentials to understand the effect of professional development on the field. The Forum for Youth Investment coordinated the work of these partners, and all

### State and Community Workforce Studies

**Massachusetts**—The Massachusetts After-School Research Study (MARS) was one of the first studies—the study began in 2003—to identify the characteristics that lead to high-quality afterschool programs and determine the extent to which these characteristics produce positive outcomes for youth.

**New York**—The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies conducted a survey in May 2001 of its member agencies’ workers to gain insight into what initially attracts case workers, case aides, and childcare workers to the child welfare field and what ultimately influences their decisions to leave.

**California (HIRE Center Report)**—This study, conducted in December 2003, served as a pilot project to identify issues and methods for systematically examining the afterschool workforce. About 10 percent of 1,477 mailed surveys were returned. The study represents the first attempt to use survey data to both describe the afterschool workforce *and* provide estimates for framing an economic analysis of changes that may occur with Prop 49 implementation.

**Center for Research and Social Policy, The University of Pennsylvania**—The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) designed a new method in December 2005 to gather information on individual roles and responsibilities: Identifying the *primary* job responsibilities of individuals rather than their actual job titles.

participated together with the National Collaboration for Youth under the Next Generation Youth Worker Coalition, shaping the design and goals of the project.

We thank Cornerstones for Kids for their support of this research but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Cornerstones for Kids.

### ***Advisory Group***

During the summer of 2005, the collaborative group convened to review a scan of existing workforce survey instruments and identify a basic protocol for this project. Through that group process, questions were identified that would allow us to intentionally compare results with those of previous studies, and new questions were developed to fill gaps in existing information.

As a result, two survey instruments were created that reflect some of the best thinking in the field and target some unanswered questions. In an attempt to understand the afterschool field and its workforce specifically, the National Afterschool Association was funded by Cornerstones for Kids to conduct a nationwide survey of afterschool professionals. The purpose of this project was to understand the composition of the afterschool workforce as well as the more complex issues that underlie the well known dynamics of the profession, including:

- Part-time positions
- Compensation issues
- High turn-over in the field
- Lack of benefits

### ***The Survey***

The survey was designed to gain insight into the following:

- What is the demographic make-up of the current afterschool workforce?
- What are the compensation issues?
- What attracted individuals to the field of afterschool?
- Why do they stay?
- What makes them leave and what would encourage them stay?

The findings in each of these areas will be discussed in specific sections later in this report. In order to conduct a comprehensive survey throughout the United States, the survey was made available in electronic and paper formats. The survey was published in English, Spanish, and Chinese and placed on the Internet for easy access.

In addition, NAA distributed the survey through its existing affiliate structure. In states without an established affiliate, NAA worked with allied organizations to publicize and disseminate the survey. The affiliates and other allied organizations worked with various youth-serving organizations/agencies within their states to publicize the survey, as well as to distribute the survey through e-mail lists, Web site postings, state and national conferences, newsletter articles, and membership mailings. Articles outlining the existence and purpose of the survey were placed in national publications and Web sites across the nation. NAA utilized these resources to maximize the marketing of the survey to those who currently work within the afterschool field. In order to avoid self-selecting bias, the survey was available to all and advertised as voluntary.

## **Focus Groups**

To further build on the survey data, eight focus groups were held across the United States. Participants were chosen to fit a pre-set matrix so that the information received would accurately reflect the afterschool workforce in terms of program location, programming, education, race/ethnicity, and gender. In each of the focus groups, participants were given opportunities to comment further on the survey questions and on their job responsibilities both verbally and in writing. The information received was then combined with the survey data to present a clearer picture of the afterschool workforce. Over 100 individuals participated in these focus groups, which were held in California, Florida, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Connecticut. An additional three focus groups were conducted at the NAA Conference, held in February 2006 in Louisville, Kentucky.

NAA collaborated with the research arm of the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Research on Youth Social Policy in order to better understand the roles and responsibilities of the afterschool workforce. As a result, NAA included several questions (provided by OSTRC) about the afterschool professional's primary and secondary roles within the afterschool workforce in focus group sessions. This cooperation broadened OSTRC's data by over 100 respondents and provided NAA much-needed data on the roles of the afterschool workforce to enhance data from the survey.

OSTRC develops and tests survey instruments that measure the effectiveness of professional development provided to adult staff members of out-of-school time (OST) programs. Over the course of NAA's research project, OSTRC discovered a discrepancy between self-reported job titles and actual job responsibilities. Previous studies have supported this finding: there is little consistency among job titles in the out-of-school time field.<sup>iv</sup> Due to the diversity of programs and organizations that fall under the umbrella of "out-of-school time," there is no common terminology that describes various positions across all OST organizations. This presents a problem to researchers who gather this information as part of demographic data. Collecting accurate information on job titles is critical to OSTRC's research since it has been found that it affects how participants view professional development experiences.

In December 2005, OSTRC designed a new method to gather information on individual roles and responsibilities by identifying the primary job responsibilities of individuals rather than their actual job titles. This method was tested in two ways: First, by distributing an online survey to various OST organizations throughout the country (n=231); and second, by collaborating with NAA to include a shortened version of the survey (as well as a qualitative discussion of its design) within a series of national focus groups (n=111). The findings of the joint NAA-OSTRC questions will be reported in a later report.

## **Methodology**

The National AfterSchool Association was responsible for the dissemination of the survey, data input, and the organization of eight focus groups. In addition, NAA was responsible for the analysis of the collected data.

The survey respondents numbered 4,346 afterschool professionals, including respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Some caution needs to be exercised due to the distribution of respondents across states. The survey sampling, however, was representative of

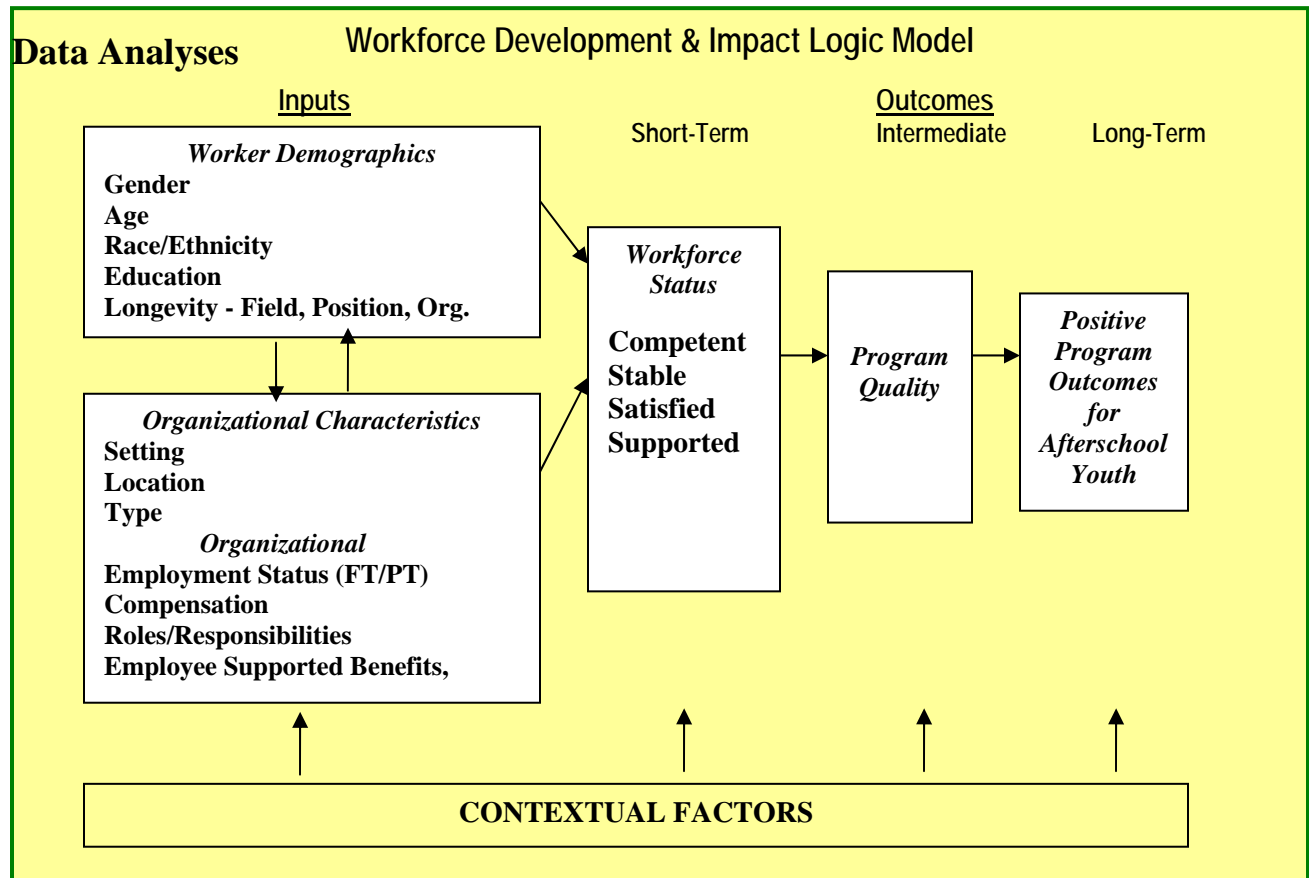
rural, urban, and suburban areas across the country. The data was reviewed in two stages: The first analysis was conducted question by question; a second analysis utilized a cross-analysis between various items to determine trends, commonalities, or differences across the individual, programmatic, and geographical demographics. These analyses were conducted using the multi-format data survey program (SNAP), which integrates easily with SPSS, used by the Forum for Youth Investment to analyze its data.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In order to align NAA's data with that collected by the Forum for Youth Investment, the same theoretical framework and logic model were used. While the information collected within the subheadings of the logic model may be different, the framework remains intact. For this report, we have modified the logic model provided by the Forum for Youth Investment to reflect the afterschool workforce survey questions and terminology.

NAA supports the Forum for Youth Investment's belief that a high-performing workforce composed of stable, satisfied, supported, and competent individuals influences program quality and effectiveness. The link between effective programming and positive outcomes for youth has been well documented. As a research report examining Achieve Boston states, "Growing evidence from research suggests that out-of-school time (OST) and after-school programs can promote youth's healthy development, improve academic success, encourage leadership, and actively support and strengthen families....Additional research has demonstrated that OST staff are a critical link in achieving positive outcomes for youth."<sup>v</sup>

The data received helped us identify commonalities in workforce characteristics, personal and professional demographics, and organizational support. Cross-analysis clearly revealed trends and gaps in support, education, and reasons for staying and leaving the field.



Adapted from the Forum for Youth Investment Logic Model

## Data Analyses

Within this section, we will describe the sub-headings as they relate to the data received. The data collected was separated into the following categories and sub-categories that are defined by the NAA survey questions:

### Worker Demographics

- Age and Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Education

### Organizational Characteristics

- Settings
- Location
- Ages Served
- Type
- Licensed, Exempt, and Accredited

**Organizational Practices and Policies**

- Full-time/Part-time Employment
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Compensation
- Employee Supported Benefits

**Workforce Status**

- Longevity
- Job Satisfaction
- Satisfaction Drivers

***Limitations***

While it is important to understand the competence of individuals in the afterschool workforce, as well as their performance, the NAA survey was not designed to gather this information specifically. Some insight is provided in the examination of longevity in the position, organization, and the overall field of afterschool work, as well as the stated credentials. In addition, analyses of how long workers plan to stay in the field, what attracts them to this field, and why they leave or stay in the field all provide information that assists in the discussion of workforce status.

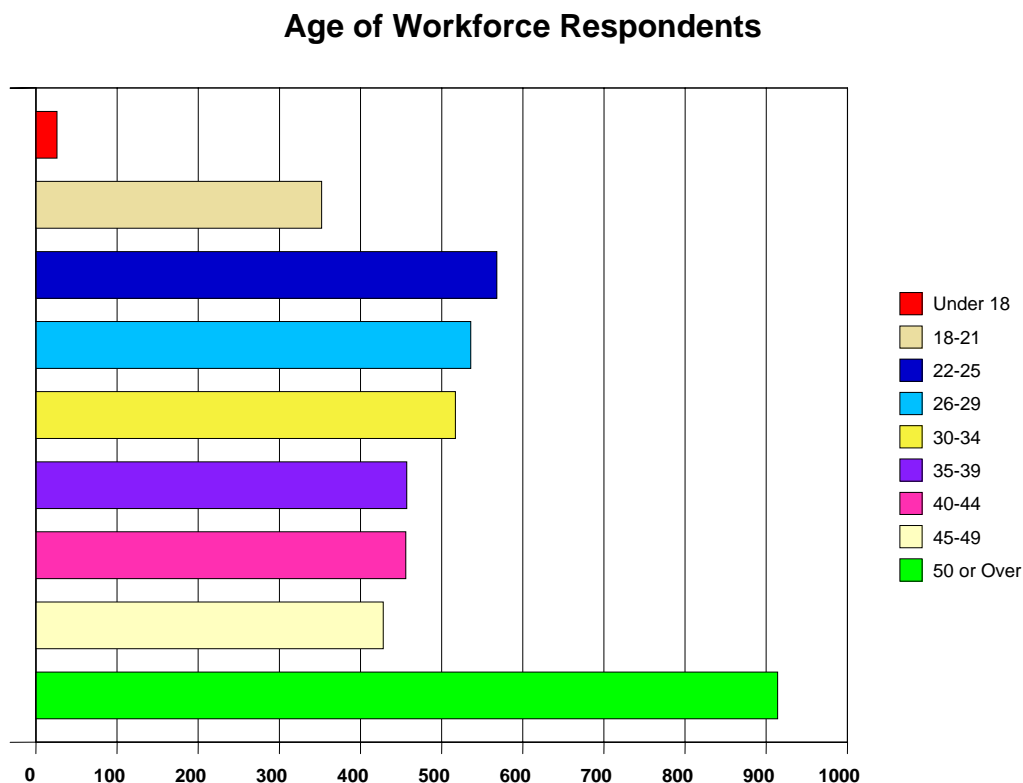
## II. WHO ARE THE AFTERSCHOOL WORKERS?

The survey did not find any major surprises in the demographics of the respondents. They are relatively evenly distributed across age groups and, as in most child-serving occupations, are predominantly female. Many are mature workers—42 percent are over the age of 40. Younger workers under age 30 account for about one-third of the respondents. Although race and ethnicity data showed the respondents to be predominantly Caucasian, a little more than one-fourth are minorities.

### Age and Gender

The average age of the afterschool workforce surveyed is 35 years. This age is comparable to the median age of youth workers (37 years) reported by the Forum for Youth Investment. The respondents are relatively evenly distributed among age categories, with 34 percent under age 30, 33.6 percent ages 30 to 45, and 31 percent age 45 or over. (See Figure 1.) As would be expected in an occupation involving caring for and providing services to children, the workforce surveyed is overwhelmingly female (85.5 percent).

**Figure 1**

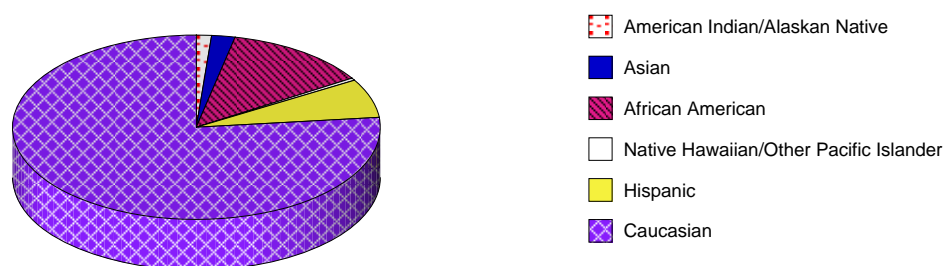


## Race/Ethnicity

The survey respondents are predominantly Caucasian (72.9 percent), but minorities are well represented, comprising 26.1 percent of the sample. African Americans make up 12.4 percent of the workforce, and 6.7 percent are Hispanic. (See Figure 2.) We know that African American and Hispanic children are more likely to participate in center-based afterschool programs.<sup>vi</sup> However, we do not know the racial/ethnic make-up of the participants in the programs in which survey respondents work, so we cannot tell if the staff make-up reflects that of the children being served.

**Figure 2**

**Racial/Ethnic Composition of Survey Respondents**

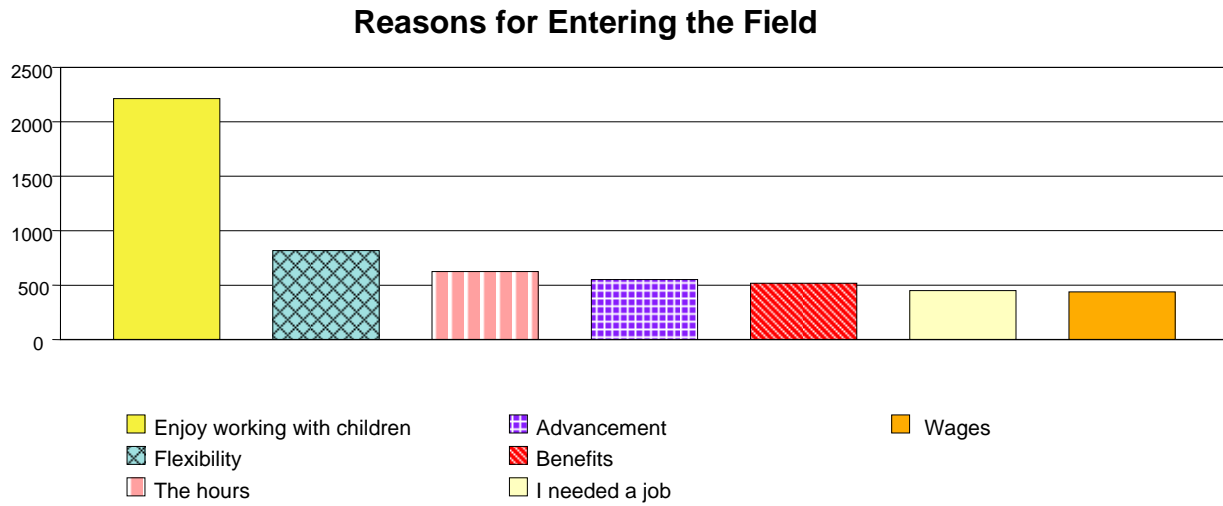


## Why They Enter the Afterschool Field

When asked why they entered the afterschool field, full-time workers most frequently said because they enjoy working with children. (See Figure 3.) Workers could select more than one response to this question. For both full-time and part-time employees, the hours and the flexibility of the work are attractive. Among full-time workers 29.3 percent cited the flexibility of the work, and 28.4 percent cited the hours. Focus group participants commented that the hours fit their life and family obligations, allowing them to work and still be with their children.



**Figure 3**



Older workers have not necessarily been in the afterschool field for a long time. Our focus groups indicated that older individuals often come to afterschool work when they want to return to work after raising a family or when the career of choice was not as expected. This characteristic of the workforce—having people enter the field at all life stages—affects recruiting and retaining staff.

### III. How Prepared is the Afterschool Workforce?

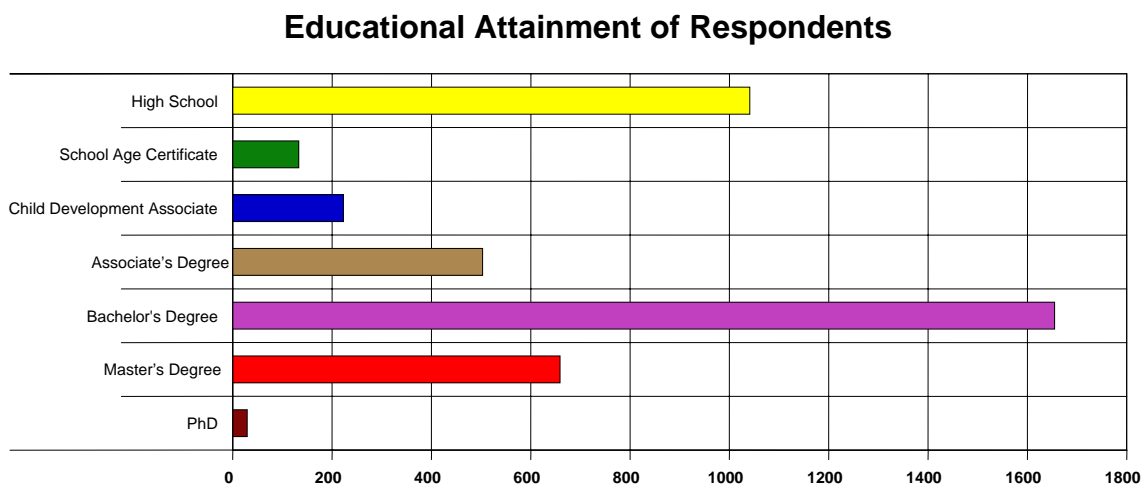
With increasing expectations being placed on afterschool to produce positive outcomes for children, the education and training of staff in afterschool programs becomes an even more critical factor in program quality. Little information has been available on the educational levels and other qualifications of the afterschool workforce. Our survey was not able to determine the quality of individual staff, but it did collect information on educational attainment, areas of study, and other credentials. It also gained insights into training and professional development to which respondents had access as well as the relative importance of experience and formal education.

The education and experience profile of our survey respondents suggests that, while as a whole they are more highly educated than anticipated, there are gaps between the disciplines in which degrees were attained or the nature of previous work experience and the appropriate preparation needed for working with children in afterschool programs. Moreover, many workers seem to lack training opportunities once employed in afterschool work, and this problem contributes to staff turnover.

#### Educational Attainment

The educational levels of those who were surveyed are higher than expected, showing that the afterschool field is well able to attract staff with higher education degrees. More than two-thirds of respondents (67.1 percent) have a two-year degree or higher, and 55.2 percent have a four-year degree or higher. Another eight percent have either a School Age Certificate or a Child Development Associate credential, leaving only about one-fourth (24 percent) of all respondents with no more than a high school diploma. (See Figure 4.)

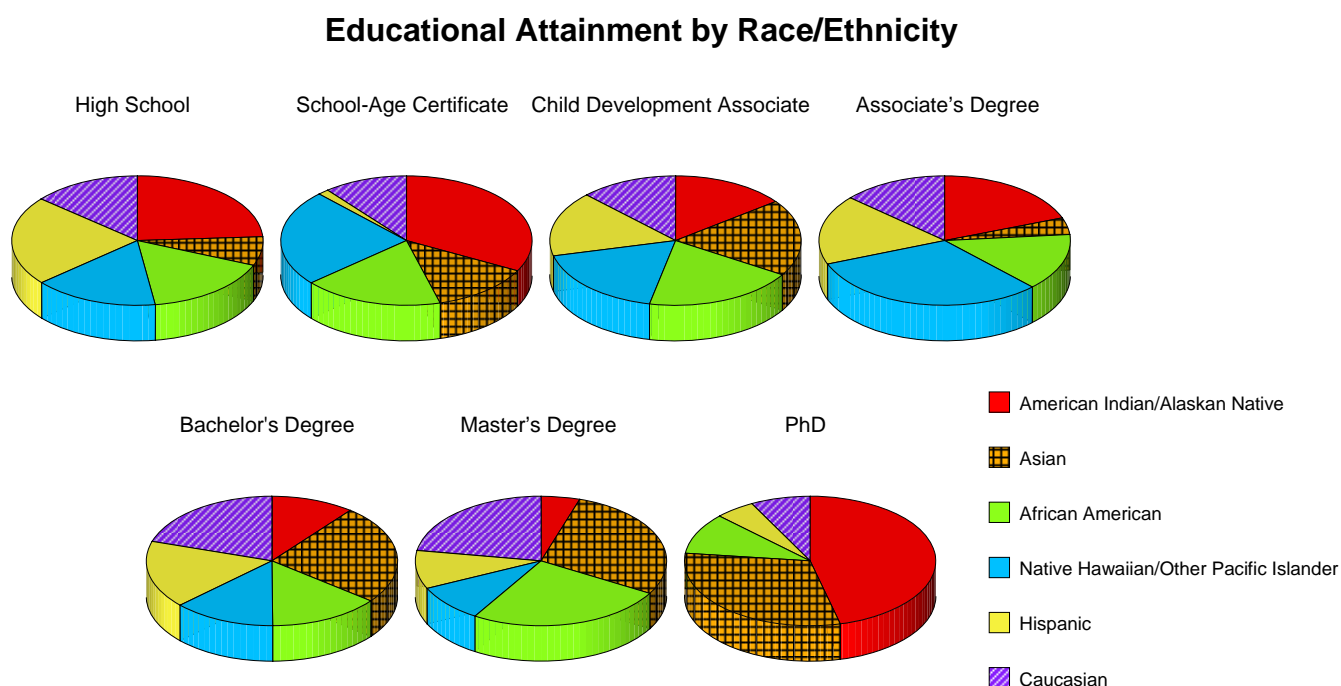
**Figure 4**



Because we cannot determine how representative our sample is, there is the possibility that workers with higher levels of educational attainment are over-represented, in spite of NAA's efforts to market the survey to a broad spectrum of workers. A report on three afterschool workforce studies in Massachusetts found lower percentages of workers with associate's degrees or higher in two of the studies (41 percent and 39 percent), while the third—the MARS study—found that 55 percent of staff had an associate's degree or higher, somewhat closer to the numbers in our survey.<sup>vii</sup>

Educational levels appeared to be proportionately distributed in the racial/ethnic groups in the population surveyed. (See Figure 5.) Particularly when examining staff holding bachelor's degrees, there seems to be little difference in the educational levels across ethnic groups. Minorities made up a greater proportion of post-graduate degrees than their non-minority counterparts; however, the overall percentage of those in the sample with post-graduate work was low.

**Figure 5**



### ***Relevance of Disciplines Studied to Afterschool Work***

Obviously, a degree from an institution of higher education does not in and of itself prepare one for working with children in an afterschool setting. We examined the majors reported by our survey respondents to see how many were related to working with children in an elementary-secondary or early childhood setting. It is important to note that few degree programs are specifically focused on afterschool work.

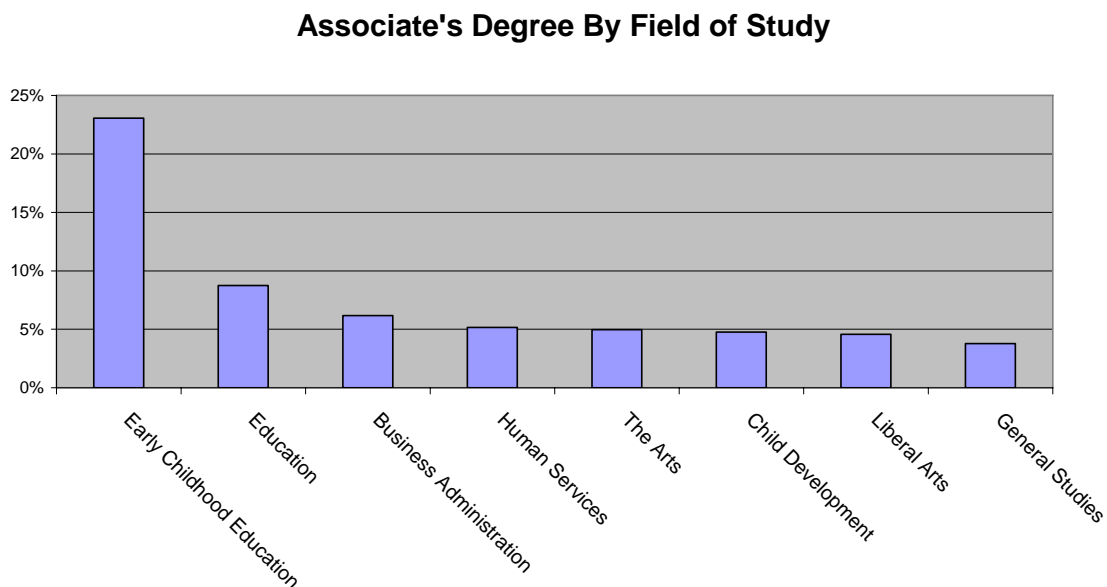
Many holders of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees studied in disciplines related to working with children, such as early childhood education, education, recreation, and counseling. Early childhood education was the predominant field of study for holders of associate's degrees,

accounting for more than one-fifth of such degrees. (See Figure 6.) Education was similarly dominant among bachelor's and master's degree holders, accounting for approximately one-fourth. (See Figures 7 and 8.) These figures show that, not surprisingly, afterschool draws early childhood teachers as well as elementary-secondary teachers. While these degrees prepare staff to work with children, it is not clear whether the staff still may need training in the best practices used in afterschool programs to support children's development and learning. Finally, the largest category of study for master's degree holders, other than education, was administration. This category was not nearly as dominant, accounting for about 12 percent of higher education degrees. (See Figure 8.)

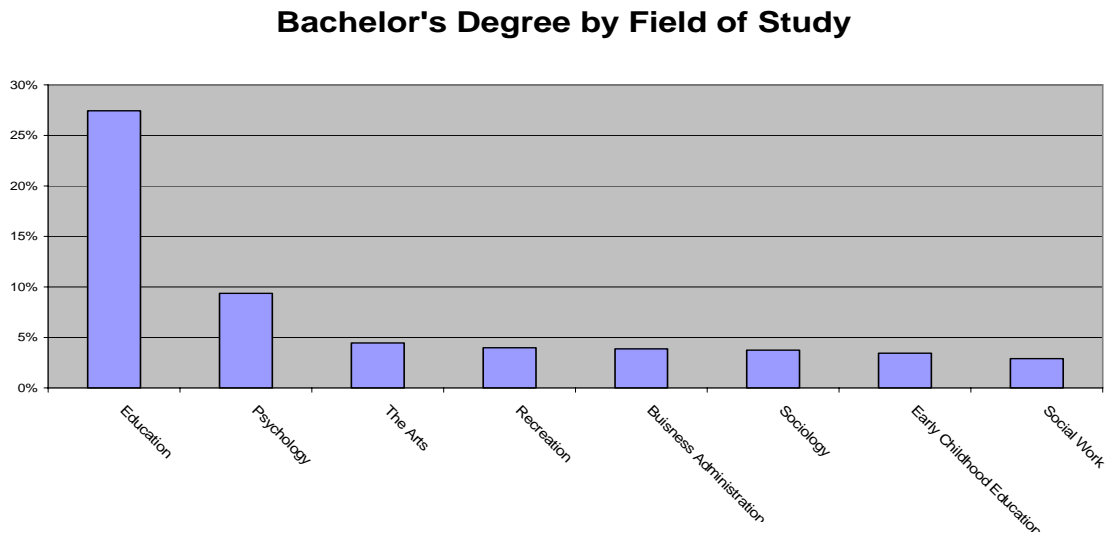
Other respondents had degrees in more general disciplines, such as business administration, liberal arts, and sociology. Even fields not directly related to youth work can be useful in enriching afterschool programs, but the staff holding these degrees need to have the competencies to enable them to apply their knowledge to working with children. Moreover, it is not clear whether diversity of educational background contributes to program quality.

The survey results suggest a need to prepare even degreed workers for the specific job of working with children and youth in an afterschool setting. Because there is little curriculum content specifically related to working with children in an afterschool setting, even staff trained in early childhood or elementary-secondary education may need training in afterschool goals and practices. Almost certainly, holders of degrees in other subjects need training to attain competency in the afterschool area.

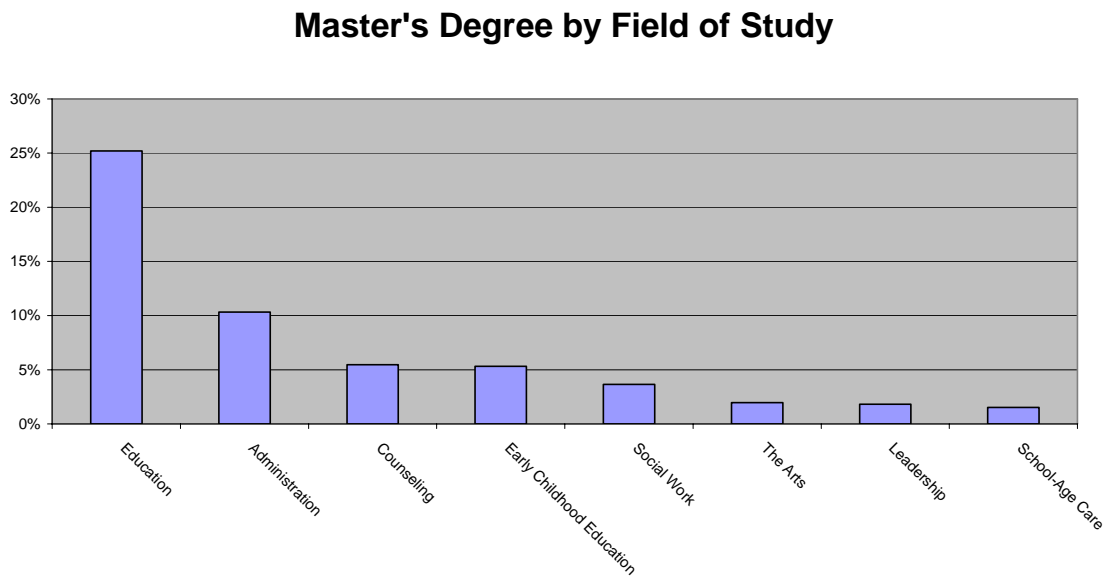
**Figure 6**



**Figure 7**



**Figure 8**



### **Relevant Credentials**

As noted above, a small percentage of respondents held either a School-Age Certificate 3.1 percent) or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential (5.3 percent). Credentials, awarded after an individual has completed requirements of coursework, skill development, and work experience in a set of competencies, are a means to certify that individuals have the basic skills and knowledge to work in a field. Credentials are thus a good step toward professionalizing a field, improving the way in which both people attracted to the field and policymakers and others perceive the field and those who work in it. A credential is particularly useful for fields that may not have been previously viewed as a “profession,” and thus may attract many unskilled workers and lack content in formal degree programs.

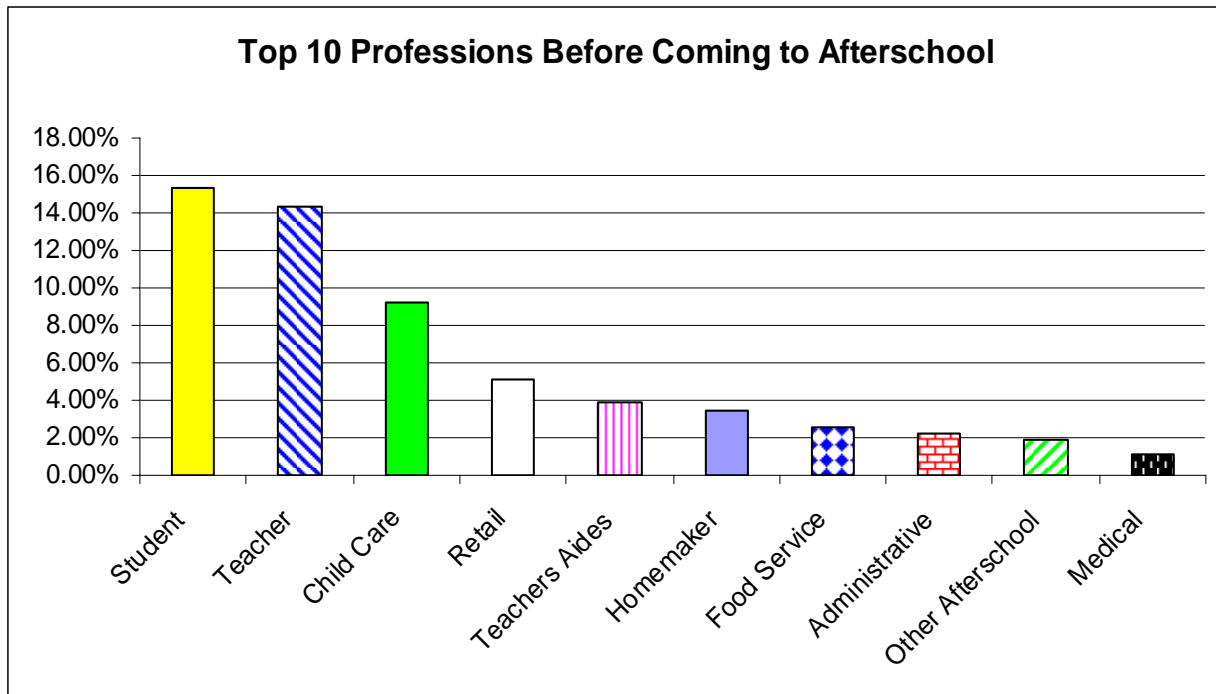
The CDA is a well-established national credential that often serves as the first step in an early childhood education career. It certifies that holders of the credential have mastered certain competencies related to working with young children. The CDA has helped many child care workers with only a high school education attain professional status and has often opened the way to pursuing higher education degrees. For those outside the field, the CDA helped promote the idea—not readily apparent to all in the 1970’s and 1980’s—that training in early childhood education was important for child care workers and would improve outcomes for children. Attaining the CDA has improved retention rates among recipients, but has not necessarily improved wages.<sup>viii</sup>

While there is no national credential for afterschool workers, some states as well as the military have established credentialing programs, and in some locations, states and higher education institutions award School-Age Certificates. Coursework in these programs is as diverse as the colleges and independent organizations that provide certification, but the competencies they require are fairly consistent. These credentialing and certificate programs are a response to the need to establish a basic level of knowledge and skills for afterschool workers. Some credential programs are broader than afterschool, focusing on youth development in all settings.

### **Experience Prior to Working in Afterschool**

Data from the survey suggest that respondents were mixed in terms of whether their prior work experience was related to their jobs in youth work. A little less than a fourth of respondents had been teachers (14.3 percent) or child care workers (9.2 percent), and another six percent had been teachers aides or had worked in other afterschool programs. About one in seven respondents (15.3 percent) had been students prior to joining the afterschool field, and others had been employed in a wide variety of occupations, including in retail, homemaking, and food service. (See Figure 9.) This question was open-ended, allowing the respondents to self-select terminology for past experiences. This format created endless options and allowed the respondents not to answer. While a core of new workers had some experience related to youth work, clearly there is a need for at least some training for many new employees in afterschool work.

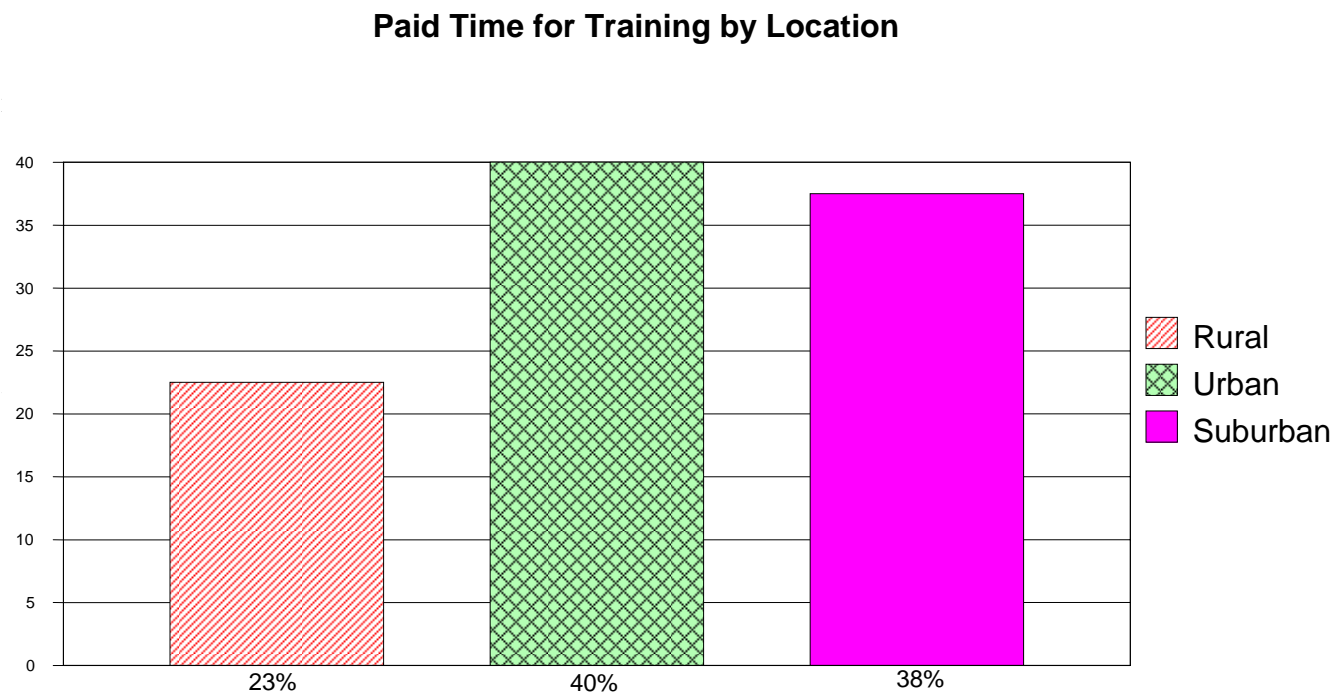
**Figure 9**



## **The Availability of Training and Professional Development**

Workers see training and educational qualifications as important, but may not have an easy time accessing professional development opportunities. Many respondents were not able to get paid time for training. This problem was particularly true for rural workers. Only 23 percent of rural workers reported access to paid time for training, while 40 percent of respondents in urban settings and 38 percent in suburban settings were granted this benefit. (See Figure 10.)

Figure 10





## IV. The Nature of Their Work: Organizational Characteristics and Settings

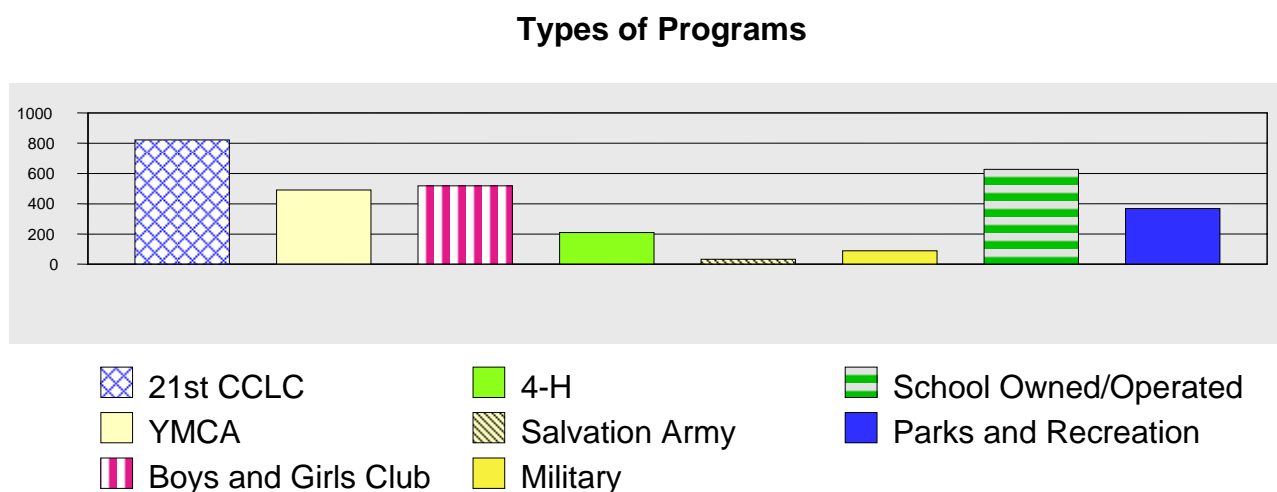
In order to meet the needs of the children, families, and community, afterschool programs show great diversity in location, program type, and programming. Our survey reflected this diversity, with respondents working in a range of settings sponsored by different types of organizations and offering differing arrays of activities for children participating in the programs.

### Settings

Respondents could choose more than one category to describe the settings in which they worked. About half the respondents worked in programs that were affiliated with a national organization (in other words, were governed by a national entity) or were part of a national federally-funded program. These responses included workers in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (19.3 percent), Boys and Girls Clubs (12.2 percent), and YMCAs (11.5 percent), as well as the military (2.1 percent). Other programs were located in and operated by schools (14.7 percent) and by parks and recreation departments (8.6 percent).

The nature of organizations providing afterschool was also diverse. For example, respondents reported working in programs operated by not-for-profit (41.9 percent), privately owned (7.5 percent), and faith-based programs (5.4 percent). (See Figure 11.)

**Figure 11**



## Before- and After-School Services

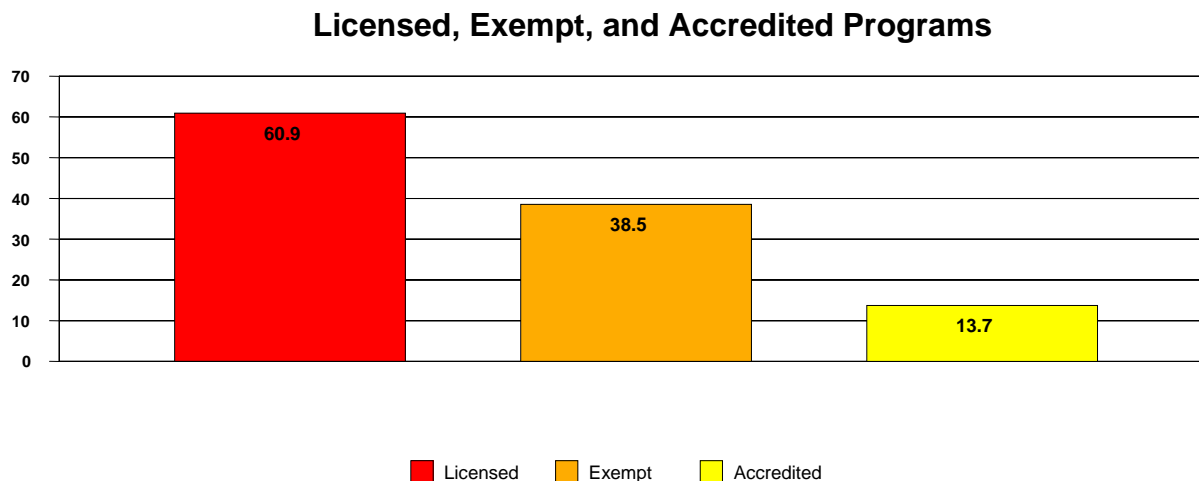
While we often tend to focus on programming during after-school hours, we should not overlook the fact that many programs offer families services before school as well. The overwhelming number of respondents (95.6 percent) work in programs offering services after school. However, a substantial proportion (52 percent) said they work in programs providing services before school.

## Program Status: Licensing and Accreditation

Afterschool programs often have to meet state licensing requirements for programs serving children, although some states exempt programs from licensing requirements, for example, when they are operated by schools. The survey showed that 60.9 percent of respondents work in programs that were licensed, while 38.5 percent work in programs that were exempt. We also asked survey participants if programs in which they worked were accredited and found that 13.7 percent of respondents worked in accredited programs.

An accredited program would also fall into one of the other categories of licensed or exempt. Licensing is a state function to ensure minimum quality. Most state licensing requirements are related to health and safety, although a few states, such as Massachusetts and Florida, are building staff qualifications and training into their licensing requirements. Accreditation is a process programs undertake on their own to improve quality and provide evidence to parents and others that they meet the standards of the accrediting body (such as the National AfterSchool Association). Some states do recognize the quality improvement achieved through accreditation by providing higher reimbursement rates for children in these programs. (See Figure 12.)

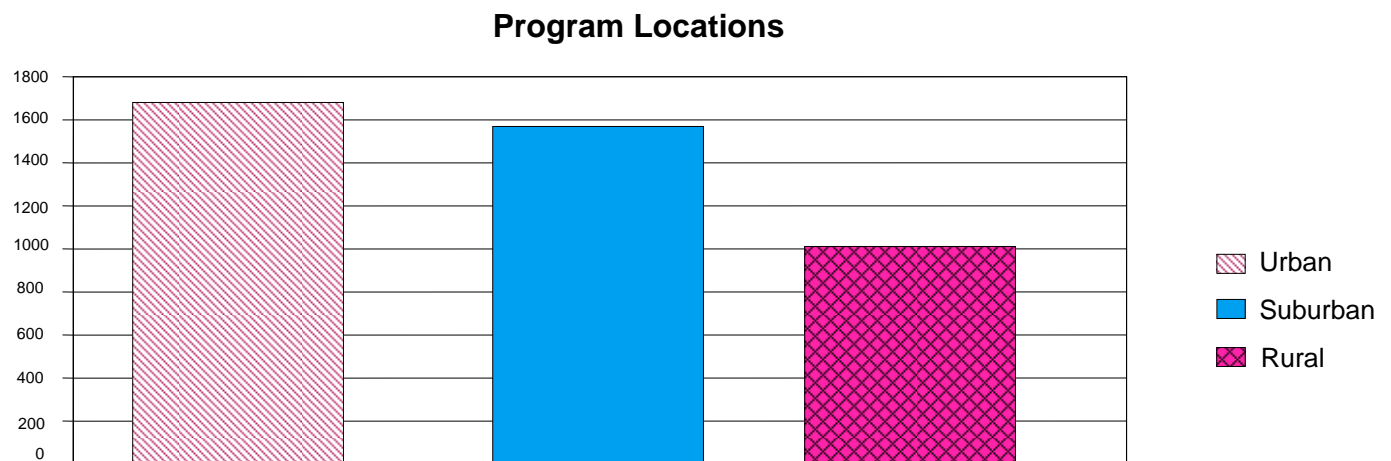
**Figure 12**



## Program Locations

We received substantial responses from all types of population areas. As noted above, survey participants are located in rural (24.3 percent), urban (39.6 percent), and suburban (36.0 percent) communities throughout the country. Workers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey. (See Figure 13.)

**Figure 13**



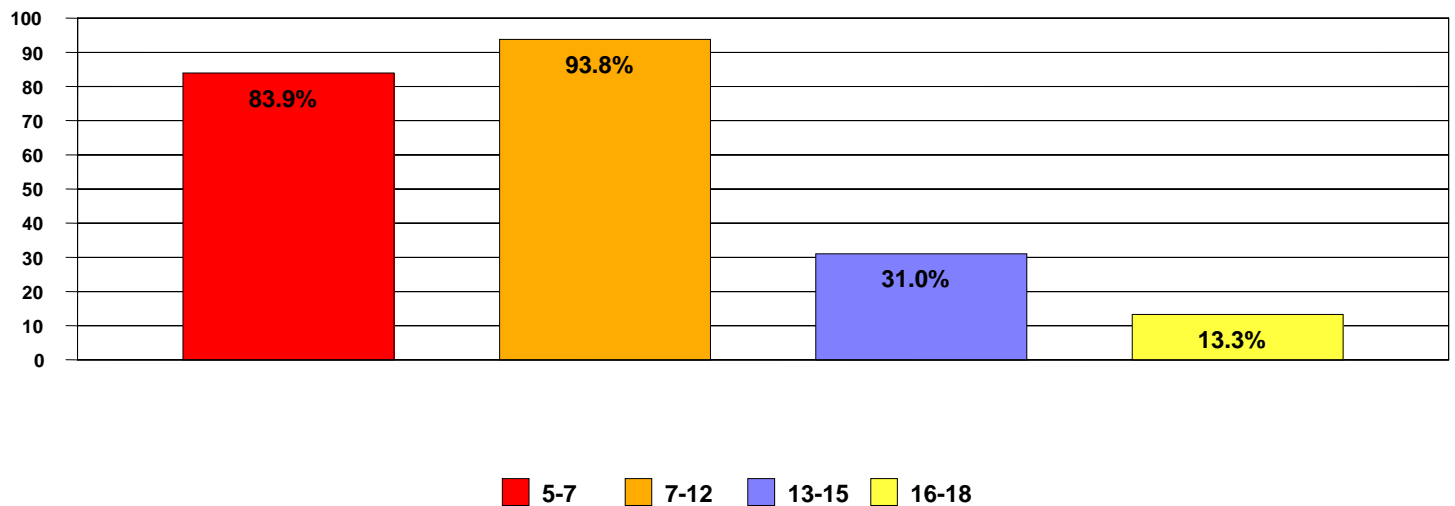
## Ages of Children and Youth Served

Although the typical afterschool program serves ages 5-14, the survey age ranges were expanded to include children up to age 18. The majority of respondents serve children ages 5-12 years of age. Only 13.3 percent of those surveyed indicated that they serve children ages 16-18.

Because programs serve different variations on age ranges, we provided respondents with a list of age categories and allowed them to indicate all that applied to their program. More than 8 in 10 respondents (83.9 percent) indicated that they serve children in the youngest age group, 5- to 7-year-olds. Almost all respondents—93.8 percent—said their programs include ages 7 through 12. In the categories of older youth, the percentages drop: 31.0 percent of respondents work in programs that serve ages 13-15 and only 13.3 percent reported serving children 16-18 years of age. This drop is consistent with what we know to be a lack of programs serving older youth. (See Figure 14.)

**Figure 14**

### Ages of Children and Youth Served

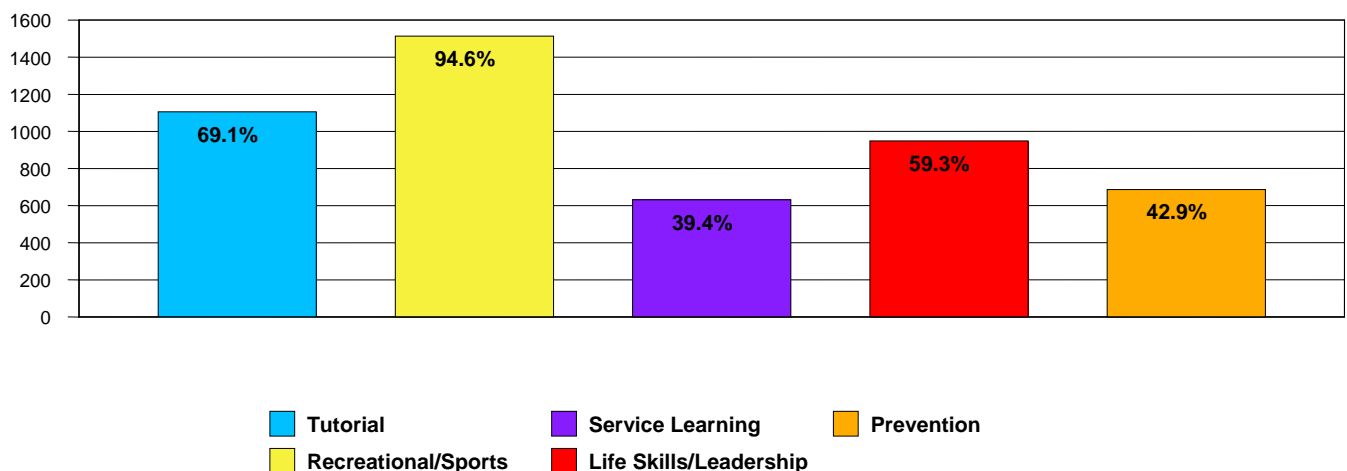


### Program Activities

Programs in which respondents worked offer an array of activities for the children and youth participating in them. Academic enrichment is the most prevalent activity, cited by 41.4 percent of respondents. More than one-third (35.6 percent) indicated their programs offer recreational and sports activities, while 26 percent said their programs offer tutorial assistance. Other activities include service learning, life skills/leadership, and prevention. (See Figure 15.) Providing a variety of activities that help support healthy development of all domains—social and emotional, physical, and cognitive—can help children be successful in other areas of life, including school.

**Figure 15**

### Activities Provided by Respondents' Programs



## **V. Organizational Practices and Policies: Job Types and Compensation**

Two of the most widely perceived issues for the afterschool workforce are the large number of part-time workers and the low levels of compensation that are prevalent in the field. We found fewer part-time workers than we expected, but cannot determine if the survey under-represented this category. Compensation levels, unfortunately, were low overall and in line with what we expected to find.

### **Full-time/Part-time Employment**

Afterschool work by definition operates for fewer hours than a normal full-time job would involve, so a large number of part-time workers in the field would not be surprising. In the labor force as a whole, part-time work is generally characterized by lower pay and fewer benefits than full-time work. It also translates into less job attachment, a particular problem for afterschool work where continuity is important in working with children and where funds to continually train new workers are scarce. In addition, while some afterschool programs operate year-round, many only operate during the school year. Because of that characteristic, we wanted to find out what proportion of workers are “seasonal” workers.

In contrast to what we expected, the majority of survey respondents (60.1 percent) reported that they work full-time. Just over one-third (34.1 percent) considered themselves to be part-time, while only 5.8 percent considered themselves to be seasonal. Less than 1 percent of respondents said they are volunteers.

Due to the complexities of the hours and times of the year for afterschool programming, we exercise caution in interpreting these numbers. There are several things we do not know about the respondents and how they characterized their work. First, we do not know how they reached their definition of the amount of time they worked. For example, there was no way to determine if respondents considered themselves full-time if they worked during the school year, but not during the summer. Moreover, it is equally difficult to be certain if they considered themselves part-time or seasonal if they only worked during the school year but not during the summer.

We also do not know if the sample over-represented a particular group, in this case, most likely full-time workers. Other studies have found higher proportions of part-time workers. The report on workforce studies in Massachusetts found that two-thirds of workers were part-time,<sup>ix</sup> and the California School-Age Consortium estimates that 80 percent of afterschool positions in the state are part-time.<sup>x</sup> Although NAA’s survey was marketed in such a way as to attract the widest and deepest pool of respondents, it is possible that full-time workers, who are more likely to be in positions where they may have the time, access, and inclination to complete the survey, responded in greater proportion than their actual representation in the workforce.

At any rate, one-third of workers considering themselves part time (even more if we include seasonal workers in the part-time pool) comprise a significant portion of the respondents. When we look at their demographics, we find that they are more likely to work with children in the five to 12 age group and to have only a high school diploma. As we will see in our analysis of other

factors, part-time workers responding to our survey reflect the characteristics of part-time workers in the general labor force in terms of earnings differentials and access to benefits. If in fact these workers are under-represented in our survey, the challenges they pose for building a more professional afterschool workforce would only increase.

### ***View of Afterschool Work***

Perhaps the biggest difference between part-time and full-time workers responding to the survey was in their view of afterschool work. Overwhelmingly part-time workers think afterschool is a great place to work while full-time workers think it is a profession.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

One way to gain more insight into how the afterschool workforce functions is to look at the roles and responsibilities of workers, especially comparing full-time with part-time workers. The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) is analyzing survey responses regarding job titles and job responsibilities, but their analysis is not yet available. Preliminary findings indicate that, although some similarities exist, there is a lack of overall consistency among job titles and related job responsibilities within this sample of OST workers. OSTRC's analysis will seek to refine the job categories used to describe OST workers and the way the roles of OST workers are assessed using primary job responsibilities as a guide.

## **Compensation**

The wages, salaries, and benefits reported by our survey respondents underscore the stark reality that workers in child-serving occupations such as afterschool are not well compensated. Well-educated and full-time workers were at the high end of the salary and benefit scale, while less educated and part-time workers were at the low end of the wage scale and had few benefits.

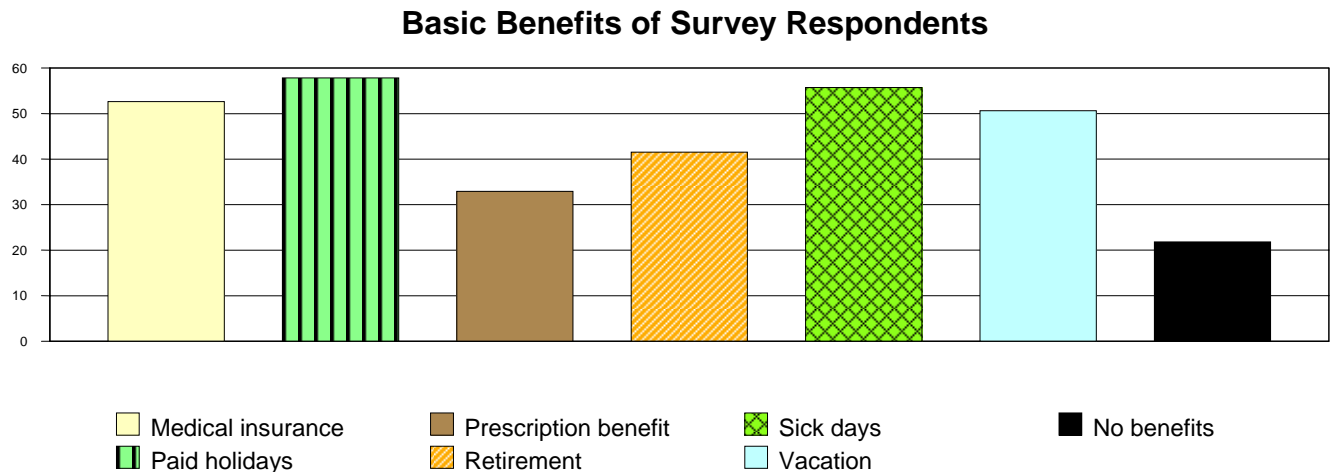
Respondents are compensated either through hourly wages or an annual salary. The average hourly wage reported is \$10.75. The average salary is \$25,000. As would be expected, older workers (45 and older) are better compensated than younger workers (under age 25)—\$12.00 an hour for the older group compared with \$9.25 an hour for the younger group, and \$37,500 per year for the older group compared with \$12,000 per year for the younger. The older group is more likely to be salaried.

These wage and salary figures are in line with related fields. According to the 2005 U.S. Department of Labor National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates<sup>xi</sup> the mean hourly wage was \$12.09 and the mean annual salary was \$25,150 for all preschool teachers, except those in special education. This occupational group includes child care workers. When we look specifically at child day care workers, who make up the bulk of the workers in this occupational group, compensation is lower: a mean hourly wage of \$10.45 and a mean annual salary of \$21,740. Preschool teachers in elementary/secondary schools are paid more, with a mean hourly wage of \$17.85 and a mean salary of \$37,130. This is considerably more than the average afterschool worker is paid.

Access to benefits varies and is closely related to type of employment. Of those surveyed, 21.8 percent do not have access to employer-supported benefits, such as sick days, medical and dental insurance, or retirement benefits. A little more than half (52.6 percent) indicated that they have

access to medical insurance. Paid holidays and sick days are the most frequently reported benefits, but even for these benefits, more than two-fifths of the respondents are left out. (See Figure 16.)

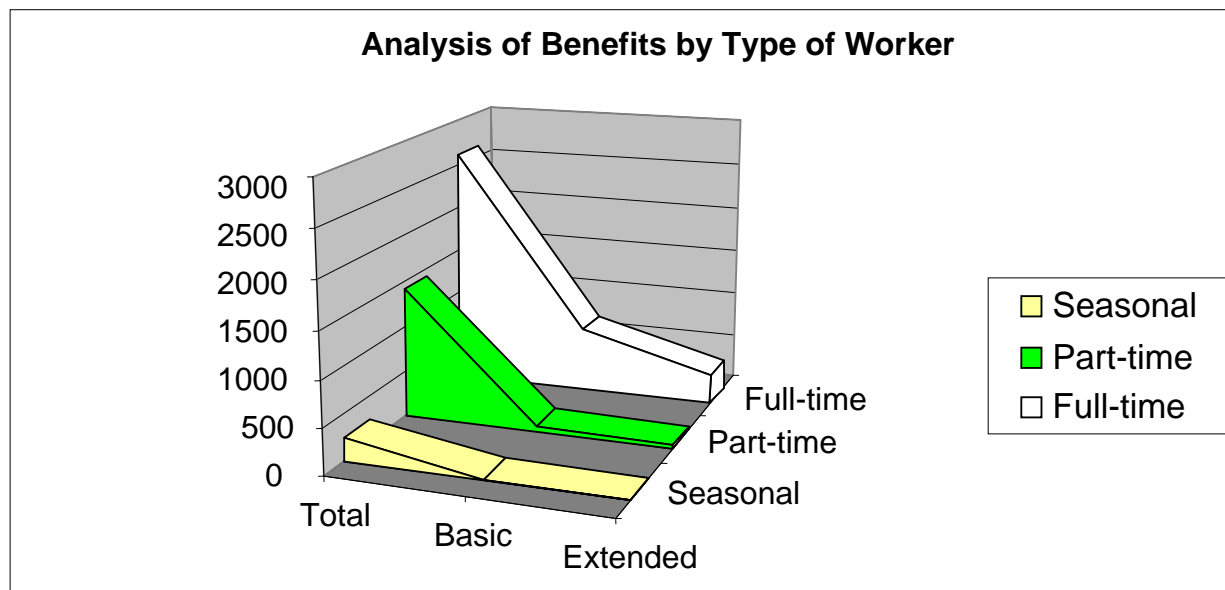
**Figure 16**



As anticipated, accessible employer-supported benefits are three times more likely if an individual works full-time. Of those indicating a full-time position, 86.5 percent reported having medical insurance, while only 11.2 percent of the part-time workers have medical insurance as an employer-supported benefit. According to the National Compensation Survey of employee benefits in private industry, this full-time/part-time difference in access to benefits mirrors the industry standard.

Figure 17 illustrates the variation in access to benefits by type of worker—full-time, part-time, and seasonal. The survey separated the benefit choices into two categories. Basic benefits include medical insurance, paid holidays, prescription benefit, retirement, sick days, and vacation. Extended benefits include all of the basic benefits plus dental insurance, life insurance, maternity leave, personal days, and vision insurance. The chart suggests that full-time workers are much more likely to have access to both basic and extended benefits, but even among this group, far fewer receive benefits in the extended category.

**Figure 17**



### ***What makes a difference in compensation?***

Not surprisingly, educational level makes a big difference in compensation. The average salary for a person with a two-year or higher degree is \$37,000 (compared with the average for all workers of \$25,000). Workers with less than a two-year degree tend to be hourly employees (77.7 percent of this category) and have an average hourly wage of \$9.75.

Part-time workers again are at the low end of the scale, those who are more likely to be paid hourly and have only a high school diploma, have the lowest average wage, \$9.00 an hour.

Workers in accredited programs have higher salaries: a dollar more per hour for hourly-wage workers and \$4,000 a year more for salaried workers over non-accredited programs. Because the process of accreditation brings with it an understanding that a well-trained staff is a key ingredient of quality programming and because accreditation may also bring in more funding from subsidies and other sources, these programs may be more willing and able to compensate their staff at a higher level. Further study is needed to determine whether this is the case or whether programs that go through the accreditation process are better funded to begin with.

### ***Professional Development, Recognition, and Advancement***

As discussed previously, the data suggest that workers see training as important, but may not have an easy time obtaining it. A majority of respondents are not able to get paid time for training. This problem is particularly true for rural workers. Only 23 percent of rural workers have access to paid time for training, while 40 percent of respondents in urban settings and 38 percent in suburban settings are granted this benefit. In addition, when we asked what would make respondents stay in the afterschool field, about a fourth said more training opportunities and tuition reimbursement are important, while about a fifth cited paid time for training. However, when considering their career in afterschool, only 4.7 percent of the respondents stated having a clear plan for professional development is most important.



When asked what attracted them to the field of afterschool, 15.3 percent of the respondents said advancement. When asked what was most important when considering their career in afterschool, only 7.2 percent indicated an opportunity for job advancement within the program.

As we will see in the next section, data on longevity in the field, current organizations, and current positions indicate movement within the field and within organizations, suggesting that some advancement does occur, either within an organization or moving to another organization within the field.

## **VI. Workforce Status and Stability**

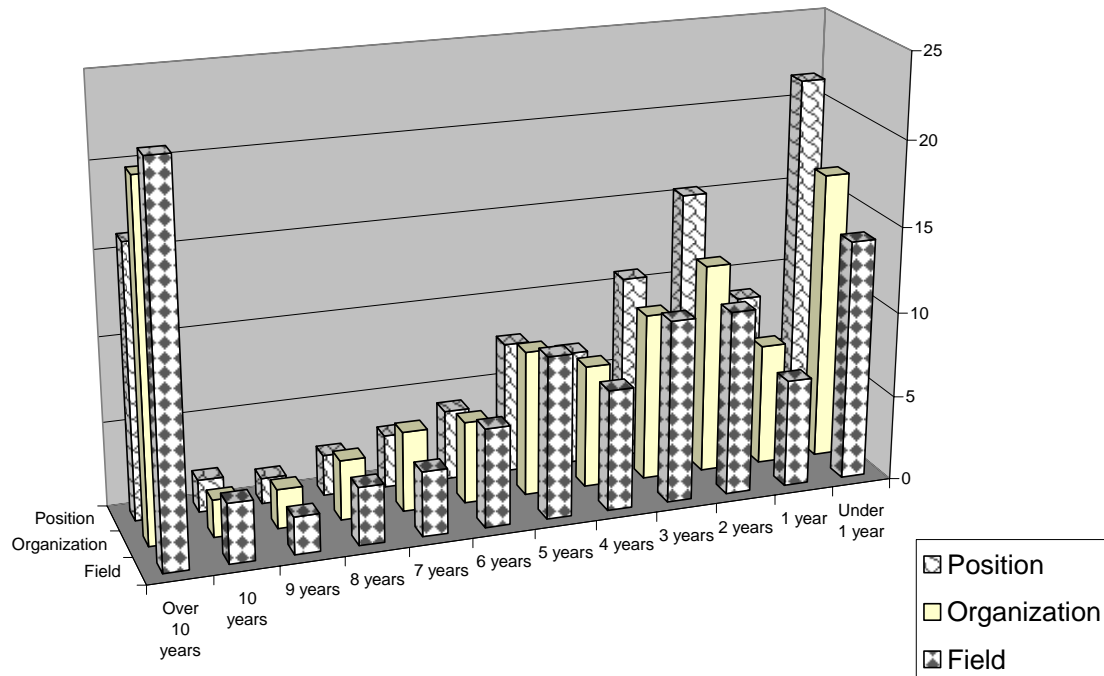
While there is a core of stable and experienced workers in the survey sample, a large portion of the workforce has relatively few years in the afterschool field. When we look at the length of time respondents have been in their current jobs, the data suggest significant movement within the field and even within organizations, with a large proportion of workers having held their current positions for a short time. This indication of significant turnover suggests the constant need for programs to recruit, orient, and train staff. The desire to seek better paying jobs was a major factor cited by respondents planning to leave the afterschool field in the near future, as was personal life change such as marriage or children. Respondents ages 25 and under and part-time workers showed the least attachment to the afterschool field. There is also evidence that degreed workers leave after gaining a few years of experience.

### **Longevity in the Field and Current Positions**

More than half the sample has been in the afterschool field for five years or less, while a little more than a third (34.3 percent) has been in the field for seven years or more. These figures suggest a core of stability within the workforce, while at the same time a group of workers with a relatively short time in the field predominates. Time in position suggests movement within the field. Among survey respondents 44.7 percent have been in their current positions for two years or less, and 22 percent have been in their positions for less than a year. However, only 15 percent of respondents have been in their organizations for less than a year, and about 13 percent have been in the field for less than a year, so the higher percentage of workers in their current positions for this amount of time indicates that some of them have moved within the field and their own organizations. (See Figure 18.)

**Figure 18**

### **Longevity in Field, Organization, and Positions**



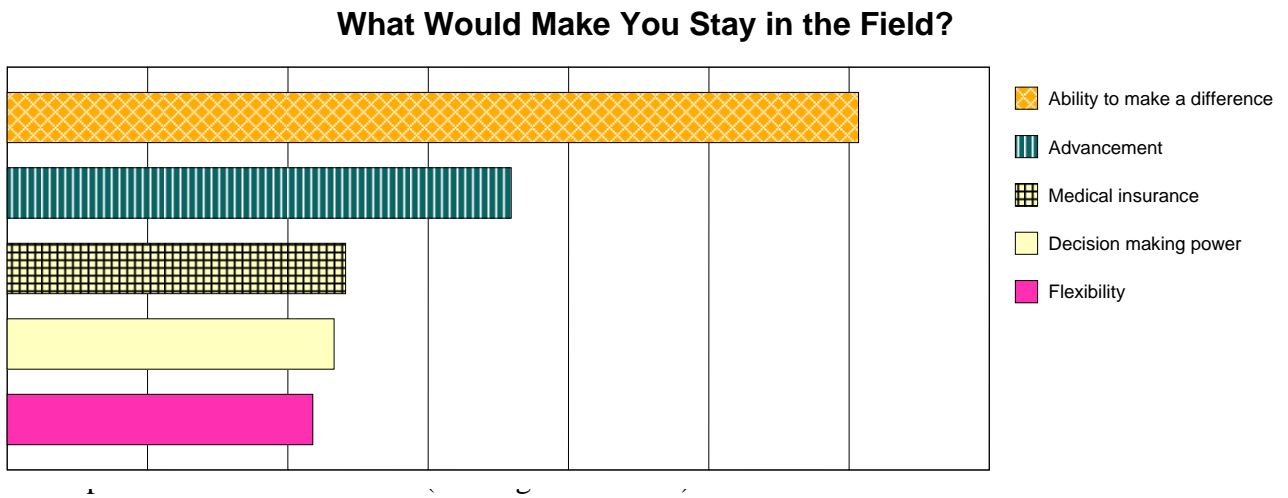
The fact that the majority of respondents have entered the afterschool field only in the last five years means that programs have faced, and probably are still facing, significant training needs. The indicators of turnover mean programs must constantly recruit and train new staff. Even when movement is between organizations within the field, training needs may still arise without the assurance of minimum levels of knowledge about specific areas of afterschool work. However, an encouraging sign is the indication that there is some mobility within organizations.

### **Attachment to the Afterschool Field: Staying and Leaving**

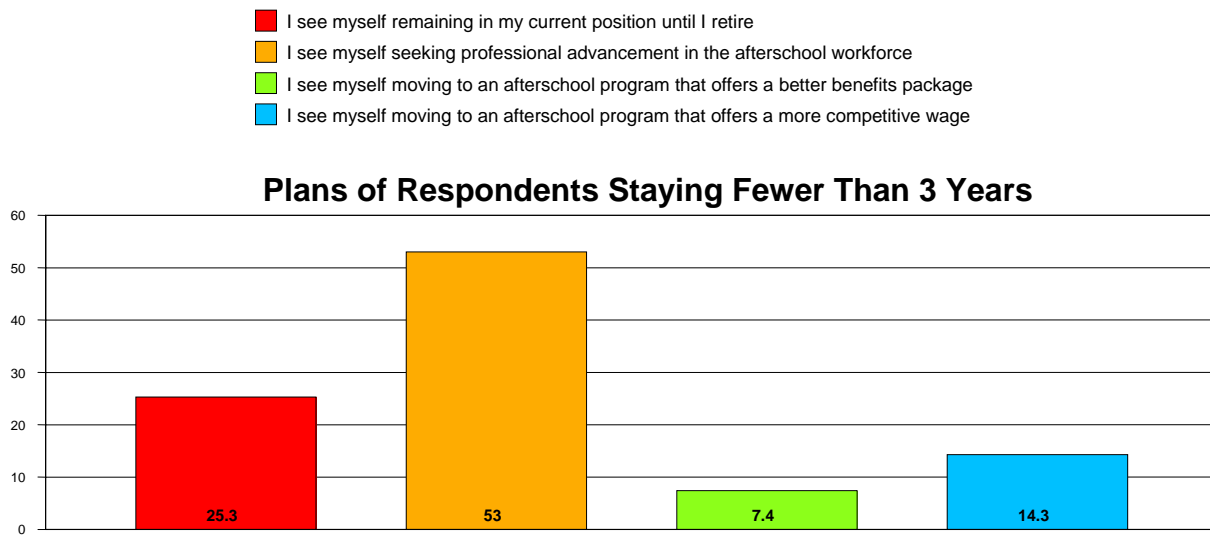
To gather information about future turnover and stability for this group of afterschool workers, the survey asked about their plans for remaining in the field and the reasons they planned to stay or leave. “Stayers” were those who planned to stay in the field for three or more years, while “Leavers” were those who planned to stay for only another year.

Clearly, afterschool workers believe in the importance of their work with children, no matter what their future plans. When asked about what would make them stay in the afterschool field, 71 percent of respondents indicated “an opportunity to make a difference.” Respondents could select as many responses as they chose. Other top responses were advancement, medical insurance, and decision-making power. (See Figure 19.)

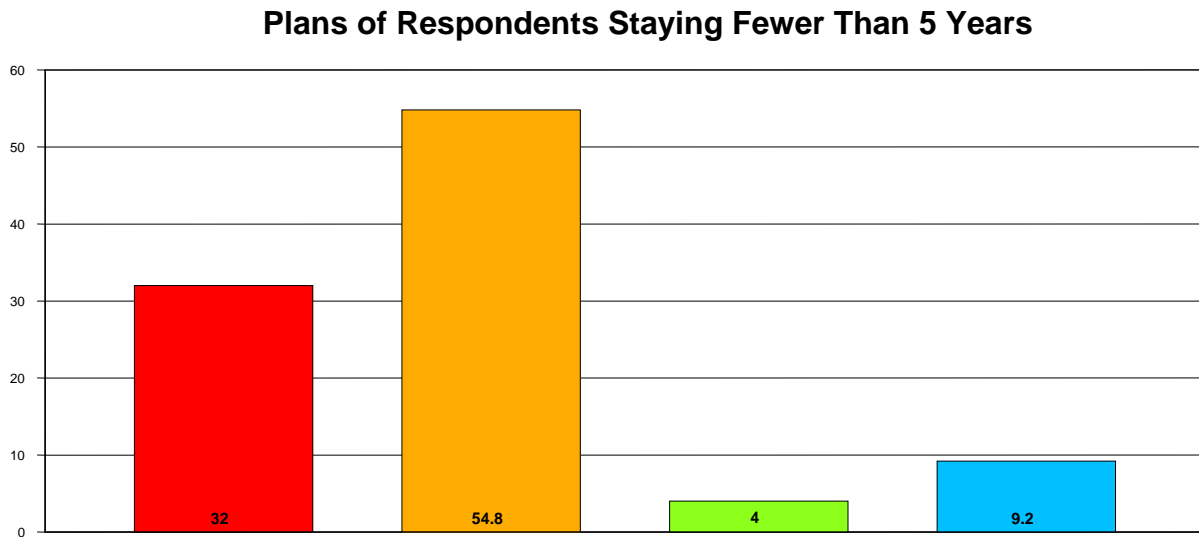
**Figure 19**



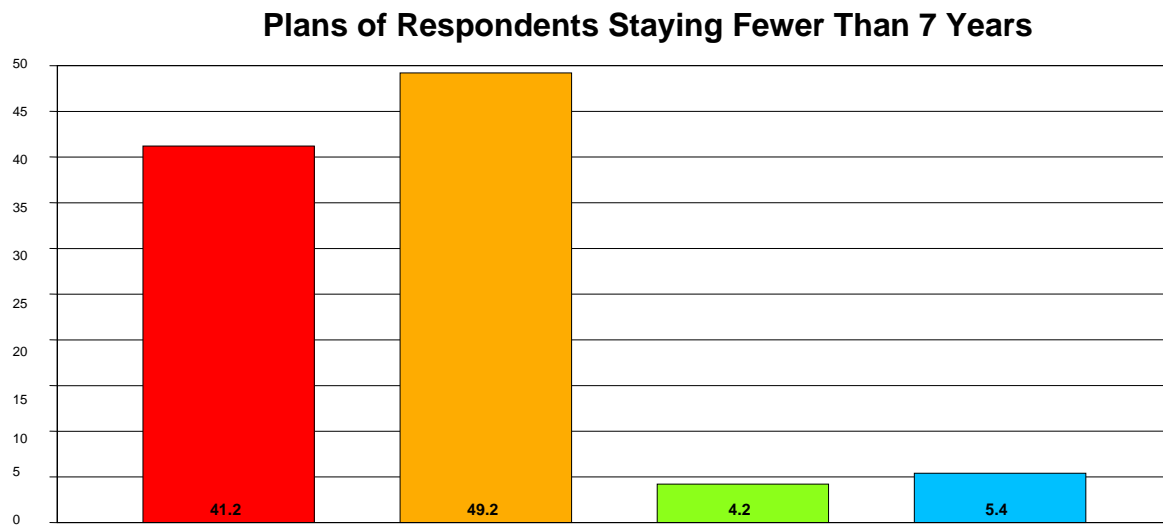
**Figures 20–22**



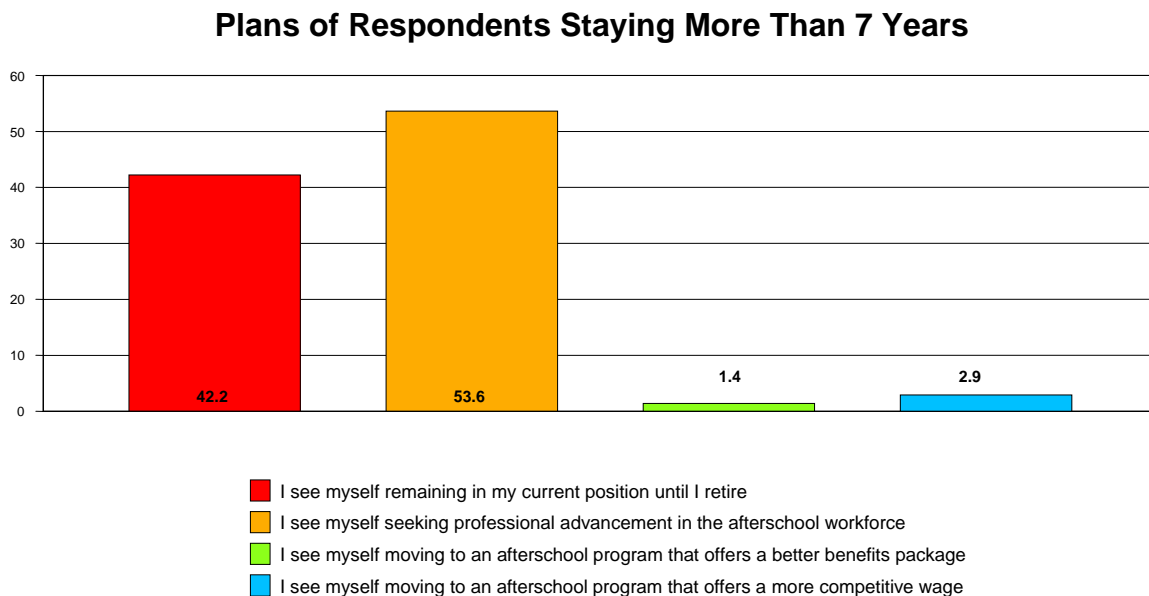
**Figure 21**



**Figure 22**

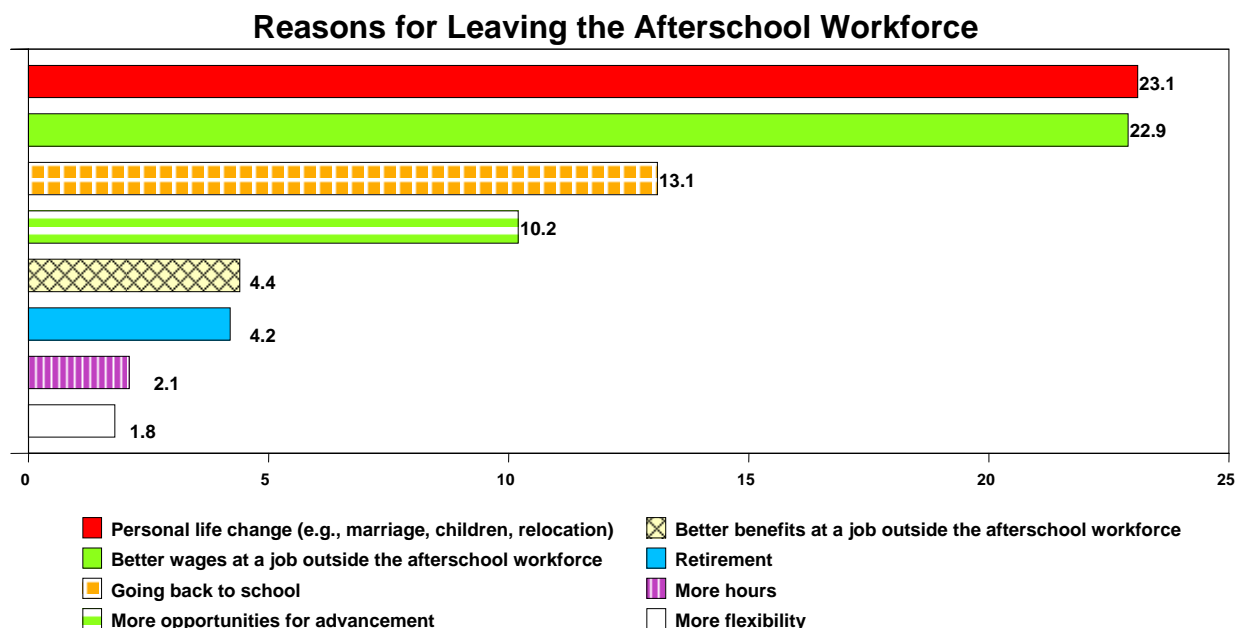


**Figure 23**



Of those who said they plan to leave the afterschool field, about equal numbers plan to leave because of changes in their personal lives and the desire to find a better paying job. 23.1 percent cited personal life change (e.g., marriage, children, relocation) while 22.9 percent cited better wages at a job outside the afterschool workforce. Other reasons given included going back to school (13.1 percent), and opportunities for advancement (10.2 percent). (See Figure 24.)

**Figure 24**



We did further analysis to determine what distinguishes those who plan to stay in the field for three or more years from those who plan to leave. “Stayers” are more likely to be Caucasian females working full time, salaried, with a two-year or higher degree. One-fourth had over ten years within their organization and the afterschool field, and 18 percent of them had been in their current position more than ten years.

“Leavers” are often short-timers already—they are significantly more likely to have been in their current positions and organizations less than three years. “Leavers” are twice as likely to say increased wages would make them stay in the afterschool field. There is no difference in the ages served between “leavers” and “stayers.” Clearly, compensation is a big factor in a decision to leave: “Leavers” were twice as likely to say increased wages would make them stay in the afterschool field.

Within the “leavers,” two groups stand out as planning to stay less than three years and thus having little attachment to the afterschool field:

- Workers ages 25 or younger (75 percent)
- Part-time workers (60 percent)

When afterschool programs are planning for future staffing needs, they need to be aware that workers in these categories are candidates for turnover.

There is also evidence of a “brain drain.” Thirty-seven percent of the well-educated workforce leaves between year three and year 10. This pattern suggests that afterschool work is a good way for degreed workers to obtain work experience, but for many the lack of opportunities for advancement or adequate compensation does not satisfy their need for a career path. This pattern raises critical questions about how the field can retain these employees

## VII. Additional Analyses of Subgroups

To further our understanding of the dynamics within the members of the afterschool workforce responding to our survey, we performed additional analyses comparing subgroups of workers:

- Young Workers/Older Workers
- Workers by Level of Education
- Full-time/Part-time Workers
- Ages of Children Served: Elementary-Only/Secondary-Only
- Urban/Suburban/Rural Workers

Some of the information in these analyses has appeared elsewhere in this report. We were not able to address some of the questions used by the Forum for Youth Investment about who were the workers who spend 100 percent of their time with youth, worker satisfaction, and experiences and characteristics of youth workers in different settings.

### Young Workers/Older Workers

#### *Who are the young workers, 25 and under?*

Respondents aged 25 and younger are more likely to be Caucasians and serve children ages 5-12. They are twice as likely to work in afterschool as before-school programs.

Given the age range of this group, we might assume that the percentage of individuals with a four year degree would be small in light of the average age of 22 for a college senior upon graduation. However, 34.9 percent of the individuals in this group as a whole and 54 percent of those in the 22 to 25 year age group have a four-year degree, which is much higher than expected. On the other hand, this age group accounts for 43 percent of survey respondents who had only a high-school diploma.

Only 10.1 percent receive basic benefits and only 12 percent have extended benefits. When looking at the average pay for this group, those receiving an hourly wage make an average of \$9.25 per hour. For salaried workers, the average annual salary is \$12,000.

These low wage rates, regardless of whether they are related to lack of experience, may explain the lack of attachment of this age group to the field: 75 percent report plans to stay in the workforce less than 3 years, and 68 percent are looking for advancement.

#### *Who are the older workers, ages 45 and over?*

Like their younger counterparts, most of the respondents in the older group are likely to be female, Caucasian, and working with children ages 5-12.

They are more likely to have an advanced degree—one-third of this age group reports holding a four-year degree, while one-fifth has a master's degree. They account for only a little more than a fourth of survey respondents with only a high school degree.

These older workers are more likely to work full-time and to be salaried. Their average annual salary of \$37,500 closely mirrors that of a staff teacher according to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those paid hourly receive an average of \$12.00. In terms of benefits, they are better off than younger workers, but many still lack even basic coverage: 34.2 percent have basic benefits, while 30 percent have extended benefits.

As might be expected, respondents in this older group are more attached to the afterschool field. Nearly half (45.5 percent) of this group plan to stay 7 years or more, and many plan to stay until retirement. Focus groups report that the older individual comes to afterschool work when she wants to return to work after raising a family or when the career of choice was not as expected. Our data show that this dual entry and exit may affect recruitment and retention of staff.

## **Workers by Level of Education**

Respondents with an associate's degree or higher are more likely to be female, Caucasian, working full time, and salaried with an average salary of \$37, 000. They are more likely to work after school than before school, and 76.7 percent work with children ages 5-12 in an urban setting.

Workers' educational levels are more likely to determine how they are paid than to link them to benefits and overall compensation. Three-quarters (77.7 percent) of those who have less than a two-year degree are hourly employees making an average of \$9.75 compared to their salaried degreed counterparts earning the equivalent of \$11.05 per hour. On the whole, however, the data support the premise that education is directly proportional to the overall compensation level.

Of respondents who have a two-year or higher degree, 23.7 percent reported staying with their organization over ten years. Slightly less (17.3 percent) reported working in their current position more than ten years, while 26.1 percent reported staying in the field for more than ten years. The field loses 37 percent of its educated workforce between years three and ten. This is evidence of a large turnover that creates an experience and knowledge vacuum of middle-experience workers. A major question is thus how to keep educated professionals in the afterschool field.

## **Part-Time/Full-Time Workers**

### ***Who are the part-time workers?***

Compared with full-time staff part-time workers are more likely female and just as likely to be 25 or younger. They are more likely to work with children ages 5-12. There is no difference in the type of program in which they work. They are more likely to have a high school diploma and to be paid hourly, with an average hourly rate of \$9.00. They are considerably more likely to leave their jobs in under three years (60 percent). Only 11.2 percent of the part-time workers have medical insurance as an employer-supported benefit compared with 86.5 percent of full-time workers.

### ***How different are part-time and full-time employees in terms of satisfaction, mobility, roles?***

Full-time employees have been in the field an average of 6 1/2 years while their part-time counterparts have been afterschool workers an average of 3 1/2 years. Full-time employees plan to stay 6 years while part-timers plan to stay 4 years.



While the nature of afterschool work basically guarantees that programs will have to rely on part-time workers to some extent, the workers themselves do not necessarily see this as a drawback. Focus groups discussed the hours at length and felt that the hours and part-time positions often fit the individual's school and family obligations. In short, the hours were not seen as a deterrent and for some were seen as a benefit.

Yet, for a field seeking to establish itself, the need to use part-time workers may be problematic. One of the largest differences between the two types of workers is in attitude toward the afterschool field: overwhelmingly part-timers think afterschool is a great place to work while full-timers think it is a profession.

### **Ages of Children Served: Elementary-Only/Secondary-Only**

NAA has long been aware of the need for more afterschool services for older youth and has supported efforts to expand in this area. Although the number of workers in our survey working with older youth was small, we did try to look at how, if at all, the elementary-only and secondary-only workers differ. Overall, respondents working with older youth are better educated, better paid, and less likely to see afterschool work as a transition to something else.

When we compare the wages of those working with ages 5-12 (80 percent) and those working with children ages 13-18 (20 percent) there is a substantial difference, with average wages of \$10.80 per hour and \$12.25 per hour, respectively. Of those working with younger youth, 66.9 percent are degreed while 80 percent of those working with older children are degreed. A large number of those working with younger and older children believe that afterschool is a profession, but significantly more who work with younger children say it is a great place to work, i.e., a temporary position in preparation for another profession. Additionally, of those working with younger children, 24.7 percent of those who take the job in afterschool have a transitional attitude (that is, it pays the bills, is a great job until another comes along, can be a stepping stone to another profession) as compared to 18 percent of those who work with older children. There was no significant difference in the types of programs or organizations in which the two groups are employed.

### **Urban/Suburban/Rural Workers**

Because we had good distribution of survey respondents from different types of population areas, we examined whether there is a difference in wages, benefits, and education of workers in rural, suburban, or urban programs. Overall the data show that the primary difference for afterschool workers in rural areas is in compensation: they are paid less if salaried and are less likely to receive employer-supported benefits. On average rural workers receive \$5,000 less than suburban workers and are half as likely as urban workers to receive benefits. There is no significant difference in hourly pay among rural, urban and suburban areas.

Of respondents indicating that they have a two-year degree or higher, 41.8 percent are in urban areas, 35.27 percent are in suburban areas, and 23 percent are in rural areas. This distribution roughly correlates with the distribution of respondents as a whole. (The distribution of out-of-school time workers by location was 39.6 percent in urban areas, 36 percent in suburban areas, and 24.3 percent in rural areas.)

## VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

### ***A Tale of Two Workforces***

NAA's survey of afterschool workers found many variations and nuances so that a single cohesive description of the workforce cannot be constructed. Yet as each characteristic or element was analyzed, adding further dimensions to the picture being created, some overall themes emerged. Principal among these is that the survey data suggest that the story of the afterschool workforce is actually that of two workforces—although, again, we cannot tell how representative our respondents are and the two groups are certainly not monolithic.

In general, however, we have one set of workers who are mostly full-time, better educated, better compensated, and less prone to turnover (although many do leave for other fields after gaining several years' experience); these workers see afterschool work as a profession. The other is a group of workers who are part-time, likely to be less educated, usually paid hourly wages at the low end of the reported scale, and, like part-time workers in general, lack benefits. These workers are more likely to change jobs frequently and, while they enjoy working with children, they think of afterschool as a great job, not as a profession.

What are the implications of these two workforces for planning and providing the type of training and career paths needed to ensure a well-qualified, stable workforce that can provide high-quality afterschool services to our children? Clearly, we have to address the realities of the current workforce as well as to consider how some of the less stable features identified in the survey might be improved. After all, afterschool programs by their nature do not last all day, so some part-time positions are most likely unavoidable and may not even be undesirable. The focus group participants thought that part-time hours are not a deterrent to attracting good staff and felt that in some cases the hours are a benefit. They noted that the flexibility of part-time work is attractive to many workers trying to balance work and family obligations.

Yet, the data analysis of part-time workers suggests that this group is not made up predominantly of well-educated people looking for a job for a few hours so they can spend time with their own children, although such workers are doubtless represented in the group. Rather, the data suggest that many of these workers are relatively unskilled and are not looking for a long-term career in the job—nor would one expect them to, given their low level of pay and lack of benefits. Regardless of how well the jobs fit someone's life situation, they are not desirable positions.

A closely related issue is that of another group expecting to stay in the field only a few years, younger workers age 25 or less. Three-quarters of them expected to leave afterschool work within three years. They account for a large proportion of workers with only a high school education in our sample, but a significant number of them also have college degrees. One of the challenges of the field is to provide adequate training and other opportunities to make the field more attractive over the long term for these young workers, especially those with degrees. In addition, we need to examine the roles and responsibilities required for entry-level jobs to determine the qualifications of workers who should be recruited.

The implication of the other of the two workforces is that the afterschool field is attracting many well-educated workers, some of whom may need some training in how to work with young people. They definitely need a career path to keep them in the field. While better-educated, salaried workers are more attached to the field, they are not immune to turnover problems. The survey data suggest that a number of educated workers come into the field, stay for a few years, and leave, possibly for fields where they will find better pay and more opportunities for advancement.

A final issue, but one that looms large for the afterschool field, is that of compensation. Attracting and retaining qualified staff is inextricably linked to the levels of pay and benefits programs can offer. We cannot build a profession without being able to link increased qualifications to increased pay and attractive benefits. Moreover, we cannot stabilize a part-time workforce without providing more benefits.

We in the afterschool field need to look at our long-term vision for professionalizing the workforce and take steps to ensure that it becomes a “destination” occupation, not a transitory stop along the way to another career. We must create a framework that establishes the qualifications and requirements of the profession, a framework in which afterschool workers can train and find a career path through which they can advance. We need to make afterschool a field for which people purposefully train, perhaps in the context of training for youth work in general. We must address the low compensation that is a major barrier to building and retaining the professional workforce necessary to fulfill the promise of afterschool for children. But we also need to be careful not to leave our less skilled, more transitory workers behind. Realistically, the ability of afterschool programs to provide more generous compensation to their workers is not going to change overnight. Nor are programs going to be able to create many more full-time positions in the near term. So any training structure must take into account the needs of all afterschool workers, not just the most skilled and well educated.

### ***Building a More Professional Afterschool Workforce***

NAA believes the afterschool field must come together to create a framework for the afterschool workforce and is eager to play a role in this work. NAA is certainly not the first to recognize this need, which has been expressed by many within the field. We particularly commend the work done by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time in its review of professional credentials and their applicability to the out-of-school time workforce. In addition, the C.S. Mott Foundation has established a national professional development workgroup, consisting of leaders in the field, to examine these issues and make recommendations for next steps. NAA believes that developing a competency and training system for the afterschool workforce should be addressed in the context of the youth workforce as a whole. The profile of the workers in our survey gives us a new foundation of knowledge as well as a revealing picture of what we need to accomplish.

The framework we envision would involve:

- Professional competencies and qualifications for afterschool work
- A training and professional development structure
- Strategies for improving compensation linked to a career lattice

If we are serious about the work we do for children and want our profession to be taken seriously, we must have a set of standards for what our workers should know, a way to certify

that they have the requisite knowledge, a path for advancement in the field, a system to provide professional development, and the ability to deliver more competitive compensation.

The afterschool field itself, in the broader context of the youth work field, needs to develop its qualification and professional development systems. But to see these systems become reality for our workers, we need the help and support of policymakers and funders at the federal, state, and local levels.

## Competencies and Qualifications

- ***Establish core competencies:*** The field needs to establish the knowledge and skills, or core competencies, for all afterschool workers. A broad agreement within the field on competencies would provide guidelines for and help ensure the comparability of credentials or certificates being awarded by different states and institutions.
- ***Create an afterschool credentialing system:*** The competencies should be linked to a credentialing system for afterschool workers. The field should consider a tiered system with an entry-level credential that younger workers with less training might be encouraged to pursue (perhaps keeping them in the field) as well as a credential for workers at a more advanced stage of their professional development.
- ***Establish a framework that includes a career lattice and pathways to advancement:*** Professional qualifications and performance objectives tied to job responsibilities are the basis of workforce development. Measuring a worker's performance against clearly defined professional and program objectives helps to maintain program quality, job satisfaction, and professional development. This performance measurement, linked with career lattices, will help connect qualifications with job responsibilities and compensation levels. Such a structure also illustrates the degree of seriousness with which afterschool programs view their mission and the value of qualified staff.

## Training Systems and Opportunities

- ***Provide training on core competencies:*** We need to devise training to address the needs of different levels of workers, including training directed at entry-level and less skilled staff, workers with degrees not directly relevant to afterschool, and workers pursuing credentials. We cannot afford to ignore the workers who stay only a short time or work part time, because they make up too large a portion of our workforce. They need some minimum level of knowledge about the core competencies required to work in afterschool programs. Moreover, providing training and supporting pursuit of a credential is an excellent way to foster an attachment to the field.
- ***Expand training and professional development opportunities:*** We need to expand training and professional development opportunities for all workers, including encouraging programs to give workers paid time off to attend training. Another need is for approaches such as distance learning to increase access to training in rural areas. We also should establish a core group of high quality, recognized and approved trainers and promote ways to share the knowledge of experienced afterschool staff, for example, through mentoring younger staff.

- ***Provide afterschool/youth work content in higher education curricula:*** We need to work with institutions of higher education to provide more course work relevant to youth work and afterschool that could be accessed by workers and students pursuing credentials or a degree. We also need to work with these institutions to address the needs of the adult learners in our workforce who would be candidates for these courses.
- ***Advocate for funding for training and professional development:*** Policymakers at all levels need to provide more funding specifically for training and professional development for afterschool staff through supports such as scholarships and loan forgiveness. In advocating for such funding, the afterschool field needs to highlight the connection between positive outcomes for children and youth in afterschool—a goal endorsed by policymakers—and the qualifications of the staff that provide afterschool services.
- ***Create mechanisms to pay for higher education:*** The field needs to explore and advocate for more avenues to help afterschool workers pay for education that will increase their qualifications to work with young people, for example, through loan forgiveness, Americorps, and scholarship funds. Policymakers should include afterschool workers in loan forgiveness provisions for early childhood workers included in bills to reauthorize the federal Higher Education Act and in state legislation as well.
- ***Provide human resources staff with the training and resources they need to recruit and hire:*** Although the focus of this project and resulting report is on the current afterschool workforce, it's difficult not to consider the need for effective recruiting and hiring techniques in afterschool programs. A program's workforce begins with, and its success reflects, the recruiting and hiring of employees who are adequately matched to a program's core competencies and needs.

## Compensation and Recognition of Quality in Policy

- ***Increase reimbursement rates and funding for afterschool programs:*** The field needs to work at the state and local levels to increase overall reimbursement rates and per student funding levels for afterschool programs, which could help raise worker compensation levels.
- ***Promote inclusion of staff qualifications and credentials in state and local policies regarding licensing and quality improvement for afterschool:*** Several states have recognized credentials and the need for a qualification and training system in their regulatory policies for afterschool programs. We need to advocate for more recognition of this type, tied to better funding.
- ***Advocate for tiered reimbursement rates based on program quality:*** We need to advocate to more states to provide higher reimbursement rates for accredited programs and to provide incentives to support staff in pursuing qualifications such as credentials.
- ***Encourage private sector support of afterschool as a benefit to increase productivity and retain workers:*** Private businesses have a stake in afterschool programming, which enables parents to work when their children are out of school. Afterschool programming

is also important to producing future workers. Not only have afterschool programs been shown to support success in school, they also help children develop good social and other life skills, so important to succeeding later on in the workplace.

### **Research and Advocacy on the Critical Importance of Afterschool Staff**

- *Ensure that the link between trained and stable staff and quality programs is understood:* Members of the afterschool field need to see that adequate research is completed and publicized widely, to educate parents, policymakers, and funders on the critical role qualified professionals play in ensuring that afterschool programming provides quality services for children and youth.

## References

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